



CUB HUNTING

An information leaflet on cub hunting.

WHAT IS CUB HUNTING?

Cub hunting, or cubbing as it is also known, is an illegal activity referred to within the hunting fraternity as 'Autumn Hunting' or 'Hound Exercise.' This illegal practice enables the hunt to train their young hounds by actively encouraging them to chase and often kill fox cubs.

As the hunt hounds produce litters, the kennel men will begin exercising and training the puppies. The young hounds will be tethered to a veteran foxhound; as they are older and more experienced this enables the puppies to be trained/taught how to hunt. The hounds are attached collar to collar with a short leash in between, this practice is known as coupling.

The Autumn Hunting season is preceded by hound exercise involving a large pack of hounds being taken out from the hunt kennels often marshalled by hunt staff on bicycles and wearing long brown coats early in the morning.



WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?

Cub hunting takes place once the crops have been harvested and therefore varies depending upon the weather, but generally around the first/second week of August through to the start of the main hunting season at the end of October/beginning of November.

Cubbing meets are highly secretive, hunts do not advertise them and there are no meet cards. The meets normally take place early morning from about 6am or even earlier and are revised as the daylight hours change, with most hunts packing up for the day by 10am. Some cubbing meets are held during the afternoon or even early evening. At the beginning of the day, before the sun is at its full power, hounds are able to smell foxes better. Scent is also often good later in the day when evening hunts can meet.

Traditional 'red coat' hunting jackets are not usually worn for cub hunting. Informal dress, referred to as 'rat catcher' consisting primarily of a tweed or a black jacket are generally worn.

Traditional 'red coat' hunting dress



Informal 'rat catcher' hunting dress



Ratting Tweed Jacket



WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

Cub hunting generally takes place in small wooded areas, copses and crop fields (usually corn, maize or large leaved crops such as sugar beet). A vixen will often 'hide out' during the day with her cubs in crop fields as they can creep around freely but safely undercover.

The given area will then be 'held-up' by the hunt; meaning the hunt surround the area so the cubs can't escape. Hunt members on horseback have a good vantage point and can therefore establish which direction the cubs travel in. Saddle slapping, the cracking of whips, hollering and tongue rolling (by the huntsman) will be heard. This is to keep the cubs in the covert so the hounds can be sent in to make the kill.

Land access is required and permission is generally given by farmers or those associated with the hunt in some way.

Cub hunting activity is very different to main season fox hunting, because it takes place at a stationary location (surrounding a small woods/maize field) instead of riding for miles across fields in a fast moving manner.

The hunt's focus when cub hunting is on a given area, the meets generally take place early morning at first light and they are secretive about the meets. This results in fewer sightings of cub hunting taking place and subsequently offers little disruption to the hunt.

WHY DOES CUBBING HAPPEN?

The principle objective is to train the young hounds. They will need to be able to recognise the smell, look and taste of a fox, as well as learn how to hunt as a pack. Experienced hounds will also be present in order to teach and lead by example.

The young hounds are best trained by hunting and killing a lot of foxes.



WHY IS A HUNTING HORN USED?

The use of a horn by the huntsman is integral to fox hunting and other hunting activities where hounds hunt their quarry by scent. It is employed as a signal from the huntsman to his hounds or followers to indicate what is required or to denote what is happening.



WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TERRIERMEN?

Terriermen are now often referred to by hunts as 'countrymen' who are supposedly employed to open and close gates, repair fences and lay trails.

Traditionally, terriermen were employed by hunts to 'stop up' (block) badger setts and fox earths before the start of a hunt to prevent foxes from going to ground.

Any foxes that go to ground are located using terriers. The fox is then dug out and either shot or chased by the hounds.

Terriermen have at least one terrier with them (transported in the box located on the front/rear of the quad bike) as well as equipment such as spades, nets and terrier-locating devices. Hunts have also been known to transport foxes within the boxes located on the quad bikes for release during meets.

If hunts are operating legally and within the law by following a trail, then we have to ask ourselves what is the need for the use of terrier men on quad bikes with terrier boxes?



WHAT OTHER ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH CUB HUNTING?

Other incidents which may be associated with cub hunting are known to include:

Captive Foxes - hunts have been known to dig out foxes and keep them captive in a disused barn or outbuilding in order to release on the day of a hunt. The location of the fox is kept a secret, with only one person tending to it, ensuring basic needs are met (food and water provided).



A gamekeeper who kept a fox captive in a brick shed - allegedly so it could be hunted - has been found guilty of an animal welfare offence. Nigel Smith has never explained why he kept the fox captive at the Buckminster Estate in the East Midlands. However, he was filmed going to retrieve it - carrying a net and a bag - on the day the Belvoir Hunt were due to meet nearby.

Case Study

In 2015 the League Against Cruel Sports obtained evidence against Nigel SMITH, Game Keeper for the Buckminster Estate in the East Midlands who kept a fox captive in a brick shed. The footage was passed to Lincolnshire Police, which carried out an investigation.

Smith, 60, was fined and ordered to pay costs totalling £1,640. He was also disqualified from keeping foxes, or being involved in it, for five years.

Further details relating to this case study are available to read [here](#).

Bagged Foxes - this is a term used when describing the release of a fox to be hunted during a meet. The fox is transported on the day and is subsequently released prior to/ or during the meet. The area will not be known to the fox making any escape almost impossible.

Baiting Areas - hunts are known to bait areas where they will be hunting and there are known to be foxes. They do this using carcasses, offal and eggs. The smell attracts foxes and encourages the containment of them as there is a known food source, it also helps to boost the population in a given area for the purposes of 'illegal hunting.'

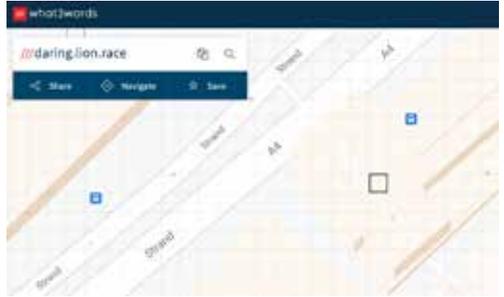
In November 2014 the Mail Online reported on hunt workers for the North Cotswold Hunt that had been caught on video feeding foxes offal and eggs in bid to boost the population 'for illegal hunting.'

Read the article [here](#)



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Often describing where the incident is taking place/took place can be difficult. You can download and use the free app called **what3words** which can easily pinpoint your location. Every three metre square of the world has been given a unique combination of three words.



When using a mobile device, the app also allows you to take photographs. The image will be dropped onto the map and the three words for the exact location provided. This does not automatically save, so a screenshot will need to be obtained.

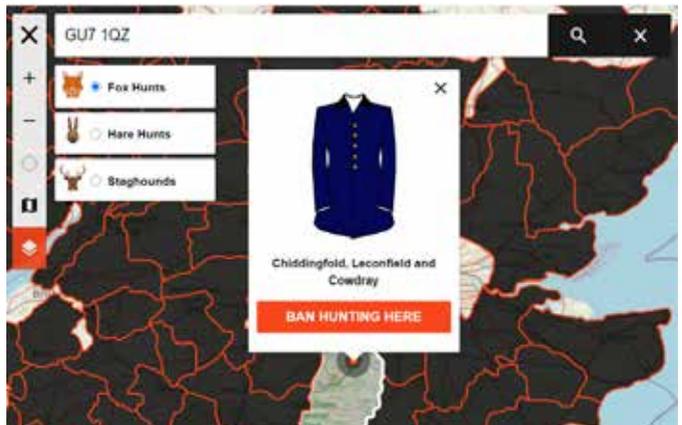


This app is also used by some police forces and will help them as well if you report the incident.

HOW DO I KNOW WHICH HUNT IS OPERATING IN MY AREA?

Our website contains an interactive map that allows you to identify all of the hunts in a given area by quarry type (fox, hare, stag), the territory in which they operate and the colour of their uniform by inputting a postcode.

Click here to view our interactive map



WHAT'S THE LAW?

Cub hunting is an illegal activity and the following associated laws/guidance may apply:

Hunting Act 2004 (hunting British wild mammals with dogs)

The Hunting Act 2004 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which bans the hunting of wild mammals (notably foxes, deer, hares and mink) with dogs in England and Wales; the Act does not cover the use of dogs in the process of flushing out an unidentified wild mammal, nor does it affect drag hunting, where hounds are trained to follow an artificial scent.

The Act came into force on 18 February 2005. The pursuit of foxes with hounds, other than to flush out to be shot, had been banned in Scotland two years earlier by the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002. Such hunting remains permitted by the law in Northern Ireland, where the Act does not apply.

Further guidance can be found on our website under **Animal Crimewatch / Useful Information**

Click here to download and read our guide to Hunting with dogs

The following legislation may also be of some help

Controlling your dog in public

A court could also decide that your dog is dangerously out of control if either of the following apply:

- It attacks someone's animal
- The owner of an animal thinks they could be injured if they tried to stop your dog attacking their animal

Animal Welfare Act 2006 – Hound Welfare

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 is the principal animal welfare legislation. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, powers exist for secondary legislation and codes of practice to be made to promote the welfare of animals.

Road Traffic Act 1991

This Act of Parliament relates to vehicle related offences and concerns the licensing of vehicles, insurance and road regulation (no insurance, tax, missing number plates).

Highways Act 1980

If a person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way wilfully obstructs the free passage along a highway he is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine. (Obstruction of highways and streets – Section 137).

Quad Bikes - the rules

Quad bikes must be approved, registered, taxed and have an MOT (if needed) to be used on the road. Most quad bikes cannot be used on the road because they do not meet road safety standards.

An agricultural quad bike / ATV (All Terrain Vehicle) used on the road does not require an MOT, however it must be registered and licensed for road use and must have a number plate and third party insurance. The following government website can be used to check the registration numbers of vehicles; this will provide not only the tax and MOT status of the vehicle, but the make and model - www.gov.uk/check-vehicle-tax.

The following images show the difference between agricultural and road quad bikes.

Agricultural Quad Bike



Road Quad Bike



Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the primary legislation which protects animals, plants and habitats in the UK. Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of this act, they are also protected under their own legislation.

Wild Mammals Protection Act 1996

An Act to make provision for the protection of wild mammals from certain cruel acts; and for connected purposes.

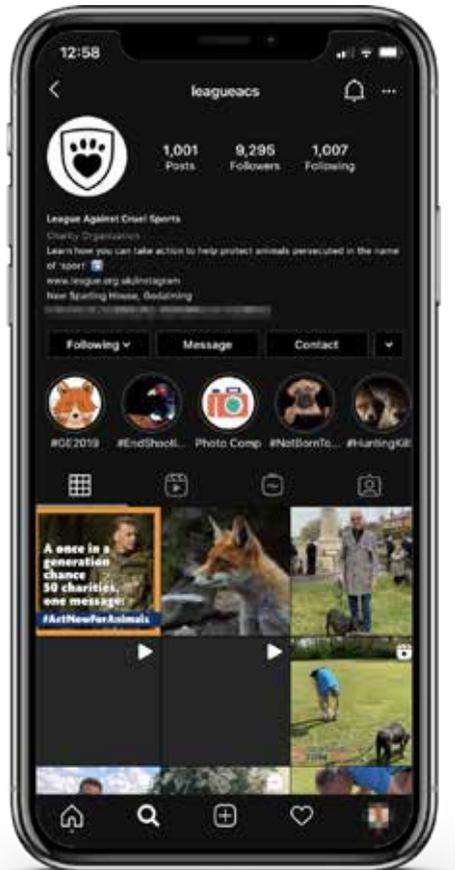
Firearms Act 1968

The possession of firearms and ammunition in Great Britain is regulated mainly by this act. Licensing guidance, good practice on firearms law, and forms for applying for approvals under the law Firearms Licensing - **Read more [here](#)**



SOCIAL MEDIA – WHAT CAN I DO?

- Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are frequently used by those involved in hunting. The terms 'Autumn Hunting' or 'exercising the hounds' are phrases often used to discuss cub hunting. Such as #cubbing #autumnhunting
- Take a screenshot of the social media profile page, to include the name of the person.
- Copy the url (located at the top of the page) for the person.
- Screenshot examples of images/conversations you have concerns about – this should also include the date/time of the post.
- Contact our Animal Crimewatch Team to report your concerns. Any evidence can be e-mailed once initial contact has been made using our online reporting form [here](#).



HOW DO I KNOW CUBBING IS TAKING PLACE? WHAT SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

Cub hunting is a daytime activity which takes place early morning from 6am, sometimes even earlier. It involves groups of people on horseback, a number of hounds, quad bikes (used by terrier men), supporters on foot, together with a large number of vehicles containing supporters. Horse boxes and hunt vehicles (generally larger vehicles/4x4's) will also be seen parked in the area of the meet.

The hunting will take place in rural areas, across open fields, with the hunt heading towards coverts, copses and wooded areas which are known to be populated with foxes.

- Hunt followers will surround a small copse
- The huntsman will then enter with the pack of hounds
- The fox is prevented from escaping by shouting and slapping saddles
- Hunt foot followers also assist with holding up by shouting and waving hands to scare cubs back in

- Vehicles are often used to block escape routes from small coverts (see photograph below)
- Most cubs will be caught and killed by the hounds
- Vehicles and horseboxes will be seen parked up on verges, roads etc which can cause congestion, generally around country lanes.



Terriermen use quad bikes and are often called in to wooded areas when a fox has gone to ground.

With the use of terriers and digging equipment, they then set about digging out the earth/sett where the fox was known to go to ground. This encourages the fox to flee in order for the hounds to continue chase. Alternatively, the fox will be removed with the use of terriers and subsequently thrown to the hounds.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- If you suspect cub hunting is happening now, we recommend you call the Police using 999 if you feel the matter is urgent and the law is being broken, alternatively call 101 for non emergency.
- When calling the Police, ask for an incident reference number, which can help when you contact us.
- The incident can be reported to us via our online reporting form <https://www.league.org.uk/forms/animal-crimewatch-report> or by calling our confidential Animal Crimewatch line on **0300 444 1234**.
- It would be helpful, if you can (without putting yourself at any risk) make a note/record any vehicle registration numbers, obtain photographs/video footage of the hunt and any illegal activity.

Contact Animal Crimewatch to report your concerns. Please call **0300 444 1234**

<https://www.league.org.uk/forms/animal-crimewatch-report>



**ANIMAL
CRIMEWATCH**

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League Against Cruel Sports is a registered charity in England and Wales (no.1095234) and Scotland (no.SC045533)

 **LEAGUE**
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS