



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

HUNT HAVOC

An information leaflet on the havoc hunts cause.



WHAT IS HUNT HAVOC?

Hunt havoc occurs when a hunt with hounds conducts themselves in a reckless manner, likely causing damage or trouble associated with anti-social behaviour.

This conduct is often characterised by distress to the local community, trespass on land, traffic chaos and, all too frequently, pet and livestock worrying with occasional fatalities. There's also been several fatalities involving hunt hounds on the roads/railway lines.



WHY IS THE LEAGUE INTERESTED IN THIS?

The League Against Cruel Sports campaigns to end cruelty in the name of 'sport' and this includes the havoc caused by hunts that are operating illegally. Using our supporter-funded Animal Crimewatch reporting system, we can receive information that can help us to put a stop to hunt havoc that continues to blight the lives of those unconnected with hunting.

Reporting all incidents of hunt havoc is valuable to our ongoing campaign efforts to highlight to key land owners the wider impact hunting has on the local community.



We receive hundreds of reports each year from members of the public about hunters trespassing on private and public land, intimidating local communities, causing chaos on roads and railway lines, chasing farm animals, and even killing pets.

It's distressing enough to see animals chased and killed for sport without having to deal with chaos caused by hunts which is often accompanied by threats and intimidation.

We are regularly asked to advise the public on what they can do to address the chaos caused by hunts and this leaflet provides an overview of the steps you can take to tackle it.



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION - WHAT3WORDS

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.



WHAT3WORDS

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 LIKELY TO BE RESPONSIBLE?

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



WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF THE HUNTSMAN AND WHIPPERS-IN CONCERNING HOUND CONTROL?

- **The huntsman**, who may be a professional, is responsible for directing the hounds. The huntsman usually carries a horn to communicate to the hounds, followers and whippers in. Some huntsmen also fill the role of kennelman (and are therefore known as the kennel huntsman). In some hunts the master is also the huntsman.
- **Whippers-in** (or “Whips”) are assistants to the huntsman. Their main job is to keep the pack all together, especially to prevent the hounds from straying or ‘rioting’, which refers to the hunting of animals other than the hunted fox or trail line. To help them to control the pack, they carry hunting whips.

Typical examples of hunt havoc include:

Hunt & hounds trespassing on railway lines

Trespassing on the railway is dangerous and illegal. British Transport Police (BTP) will always investigate such incidents. Not only is there the risk of terrible injuries to the people and animals involved, this also causes unnecessary delays to passengers.



Hunts & hounds on roads

Hounds on the road is not only a dangerous risk to the animals involved, but also to those travelling in vehicles. It causes delays and there have been a number of cases where hounds have been killed as a result.



The Road Traffic Act 1988 contains a provision under Section 27, subsection (1) which makes it a criminal offence to cause or permit a dog to be on a road without the dog being held on a lead.

Although there is an exception for hunts which reads "subsection (1) - does not apply to dogs proved to have been at the material time in use under proper control for sporting purposes." The key words for this purpose are "under proper control" - there is no blanket exemption for foxhounds. When hounds are being taken out for exercise and use a road they must, like any other dog, be on a lead, or else an offence under **Section 27 of the Road Traffic Act** will be committed.



Hunt & hounds trespassing on private land

Trespass is any direct interference with your property without lawful authority. So whilst the postman does not trespass by delivering your post, no one has the right to enter a rear garden nor indeed your front path unless there is a good reason for doing so. An out of control hunt will never have a right to be on your property and it doesn't matter if it's just hounds that trespass, as the League took a hunt to Court and established case law that a trespass by the hounds alone, without anyone accompanying them, is actionable.

Trespass is a civil offence and not a criminal matter. Should the trespass continue, it is possible to go down the lines of seeking an injunction through the court against the hunt.



Hunt & hounds trespassing on corporate body land

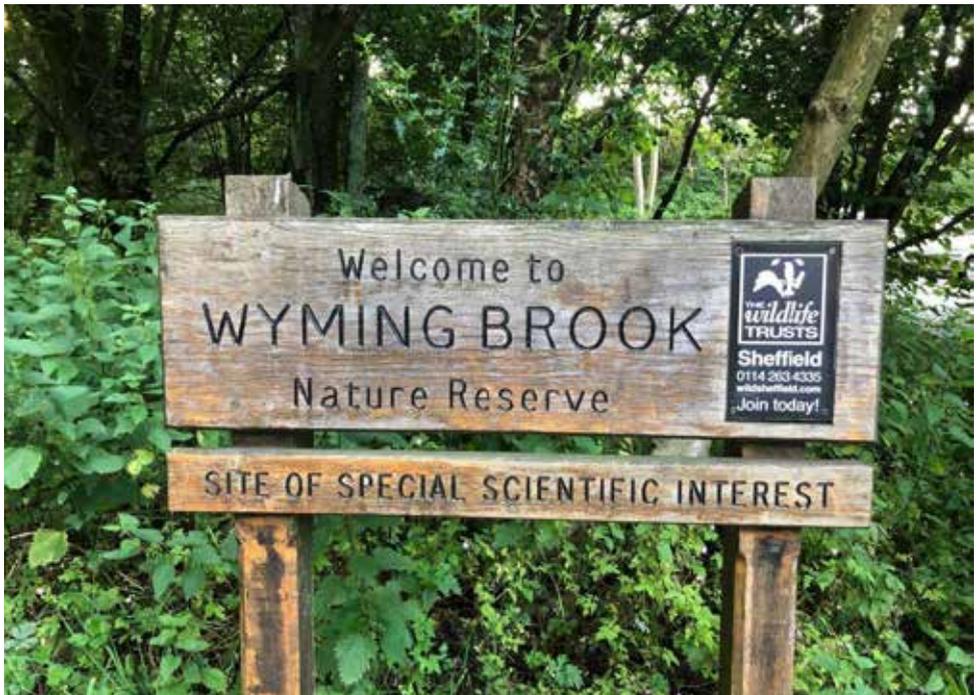
Corporate body land is land owned by a group or organisation that has its own legal rights and responsibilities, such as the National Trust and Council.

Hunting restrictions apply and the hunt will require land owners permission; all legislation still applies and they must comply with the law.

Hunts & Hounds on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The landowner/occupier must give notice and get Natural England's consent before carrying out or allowing someone else to carry out a planned activity on it.

However, in SSSI's, certain activities are prohibited and there are legal duties concerning how the areas should be managed and protected. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, disturb or destroy an area known to be SSSI' or intentionally or recklessly disturb the wildlife in an SSSI.



Hounds chasing pets

Hunt hounds are known to run amok and are not always kept under 'proper control.' As a result, they have been known to chase, and at times cause injury, to domestic pets such as cats and dogs.



Hunt & hounds chasing livestock

Hunts are known to use land they do not have permission to be on. As can be seen in this image, the hunt is going through agricultural land with both horses and hounds where sheep are present. This can cause significant distress to livestock and has resulted in sheep and horses aborting their young. A packs of hounds, racing through a field containing livestock, can inflict devastating injuries, shock and possible death. Also resulting in financial loss and emotional trauma to the keeper of the livestock.



Rioting on another species

A pack of hounds cast to follow the scent of a target species will be focused without being distracted to another quarry unless they are searching to pick up the scent.

In these circumstances a pack of hounds can act in concert and be out of control picking up the scent of a different species and will be said to be rioting.

An example may be a foxhound pack picks up the scent of a deer and will chase (riot on the deer) often leading to its death.

A whipper-in will need to gain back control and will 'rate' the hounds, usually using their whip and shouting, and the wider hunt followers may make loud distraction noises to support the whipper-in.



Illegal use of quad bikes by hunt staff

Quad bikes are integral to hunting. They are used by the Terrier Men, to transport the terriers and, on occasions, captive foxes for release during a hunt.

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.

A quad bike can only carry passengers if it is designed to do so and has the right number of seats. Check with the manufacturer if you're not sure.

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.



Agricultural quad bike (used by hunts)



Road quad bike

The carrying of firearms by hunt staff

It is not illegal for animals to be flushed using a maximum of two dogs to a marksman for it to be shot. However, the relevant firearms licences must be in place and the land owner must have given permission to be on the land. If the landowner has not given permission, then this would be a criminal offence – Trespass with a Firearm (Section 20 of the Firearms Act 1968).



Anti-social behaviour by hunt staff and followers of the hunt

During hunt meets both hunt staff and followers of the hunt are known to behave in an anti-social manner. This relates to land trespass, terrorising animals/livestock, causing havoc and behaving in a threatening/abusive manner.

The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 would relate to such offences and also covers actions which cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons.

Blocking of roads by hunts

Members of the hunt, together with hunt supporters/followers are known to block off the roads using their vehicles. This could be to allow the horses and hounds to travel along the road or it might be to prevent the public from seeing what is taking place. A number of hunt supporters also have binoculars and are used as a lookout for the hunt. They use radios to communicate with each other.

Public disorder at Boxing Day meets

Boxing Day meets have been tradition in the UK for many years. During these meets, the hunts often gather in public spaces and on public roads with large crowds in attendance; resulting in concerns for public safety.

Conflict with hunt monitors & SABs

During meets there are regularly public order problems between the hunt and SABs which can result in police attendance and, on occasions, arrests being made.



Civil Court redress if pets/livestock killed

The 2006 Animal Welfare Act penalises dog owners for acts of cruelty and neglect.

It is a criminal offence to allow a dog to be 'dangerously out of control' whereby it attacks or causes serious injury to a person or livestock, or to behave in such a way that makes a person worried that it might attack them.

If someone has reasonable apprehension that a dog may act 'out of control' the owner can still be penalised.

Any dog that behaves dangerously may be seized by the council dog warden and their owners' prosecuted. The dogs may be destroyed if the magistrate considers that they are a danger to the public.

In December 2021, John Sampson, Hunt Master of the Western Hunt in Cornwall was found guilty over hounds' savage killing of a beloved pet called named Mini. He was charged with criminal damage (for the cat) and being in charge of at least one dog dangerously out of control.

Full details of the case can be found [here](#)



WHAT'S THE LAW?

There are a number of laws which may apply when hunts cause havoc.

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).

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.

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.

Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994 - Aggravated Trespass

A person commits the offence of aggravated trespass if he trespasses on land [in the open air] and, in relation to any lawful activity which persons are engaging in or are about to engage in on that or adjoining land [in the open air], does anything which is intended by him to have the effect : (a) of intimidating those persons or any of them so as to deter them or any of them from engaging in that activity (b) of obstructing that activity or (c) of disrupting that activity.

Criminal Damage Act 1971

- (1) Destroying or damaging property
- (2) Threats to destroy or damage property
- (3) Possessing anything with intent to destroy or damage property
- (4) Punishment of offences
- (5) Without lawful excuse
- (6) Search for things intended for use in committing offences of criminal damage.

Railway Regulation Act 1840

Section 16

For punishment of persons obstructing the officers of any railway company, or trespassing upon any railway.

Road Traffic Act 1988

(Section 27)

Control of dogs on roads.

Dogs – Protection of Livestock Act 1953

An Act to provide for the punishment of persons whose dogs worry livestock on agricultural land; and for purposes connected with the matter aforesaid. However, section (b) of the exemptions to this act reads 'a police dog, a guide dog, trained sheep dog, a working gun dog or a pack of hounds.'

The Control of Dogs Order 1992

Controlling your dog in public

It's against the law to let a dog be dangerously out of control anywhere, such as:

(a) in a public place

(b) in a private place (for example a neighbour's house or garden in the owner's home)

The law applies to all dogs.

Firearms Act 1968

Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (section 3)

Keeping dogs under proper control.

Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Injunctions, Criminal Behaviour Orders, Dispersal Powers, Dangerous Dogs, Firearms.

Environmental Law - Sites of Special Scientific Interest

SSSI's are areas of special interest due to their fauna, flora, geological or physiographical features. The relevant statutory agencies and the DoENI designate areas as SSSI's under a special notification procedure. In brief, this means that an agency can only confirm an area as an SSSI if it has first notified the owner and occupier (as well as the local planning authority and Secretary of State) and given them a chance to make representations.

WHAT CAN I DO?



If anti-social behaviour is a problem in your area, there are things you can do to help put a stop to it:

- Talk to neighbours, are they affected as well? It may be easier for you to take action together.
- Keep detailed/accurate records of incidents. Photographic evidence can be helpful.
- Obtain details of witnesses where possible – assure them of confidentiality and that they can help without having to go to court (see below).
- **Write to the hunt** concerned by recorded delivery, with details of your complaint - keep copies and retain any correspondence you receive.
- Report anti-social behaviour to your local neighbourhood policing teams or to your local council. Your local council and police work together with other services to stop antisocial behaviour (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in England and Community Safety Partnerships in Wales).

If you feel the matter is urgent (happening now) and the law is being broken, we recommend you call the Police using 999.

If the havoc has already taken place, report to the Police using the non emergency contact number 101. Ensure you are given an incident reference number, which can also help when you contact us.

We would also encourage you to report the incident to the League's Animal Crimewatch team. The incident can be reported to us via our online reporting form

www.league.org.uk/animal-crimewatch/report/

or by calling our confidential Animal Crimewatch line on

0300 444 1234.



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The League Against Cruel Sports is a registered charity in England and Wales (no. 1095234) and Scotland (no. SC045533), and is registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee (no. 04037610).