



**LEAGUE**  
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS



**Hunt Havoc:**  
the human cost of  
hunting with hounds

October 2022

**#EndHunting**





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# Executive Summary

Every year, the League Against Cruel Sports receives hundreds of reports from members of the public about suspected illegal hunting by hunts. These are not only about the animals that are chased and killed but also about the chaos hunts cause by marauding across private and public land, intimidating local communities, riders and hounds using public roads and railway lines, and hounds chasing farm animals, and even killing pets.

Hunting with dogs poses significant risk to the physical safety of the public as well as mental distress as people fear for their safety and/or witness upsetting scenes.

The very nature of the 'sport' is violent and with a single-minded purpose to pursue and kill a wild animal whatever path it takes. It should therefore be no surprise that this report will evidence the huge impact on the local communities living in hunt areas in the form of hunt havoc.

Furthermore, it is evident that hunting parties are unable or unwilling to adequately control their hounds to ensure they do not pursue live animals. This report identifies at least 310 incidents of hunt havoc across 53 counties between 1 January 2018 and 23 March 2022. That's more than one a week, every week for the last four years showing that hunts regularly cause chaos around the country.

However, while the data collected and the methodology used attempts to ensure an accurate picture of hunt havoc, this report can only focus on the data available either publicly or through the League's own intelligence gathering. The League, therefore, has concluded that this data only reflects a small proportion of the incidents that occurred during this time period.

Even so, the data we do have clearly shows the havoc hounds and hunting parties regularly wreak on local communities, risking the safety of members of the public, their pets and property. The Hunting Act 2004 must be strengthened to better incentivise hunts to comply with the law and ensure they can keep control of their hounds and people and animals are protected from their activities.

Hunting with dogs has a negative impact on animals, people and local communities. This report explores the wider impact of this traditional 'sport'.

## Hunting in Great Britain

Following Scotland with the Protection of Wild Mammals Act 2002, the Westminster government made traditional hunting with dogs illegal in England and Wales, subject to specific exemptions, with the introduction of the Hunting Act 2004.

The exemptions include<sup>1</sup>:

1. Preventing or reducing serious damage the wild animal would cause to livestock, crops etc
2. Obtaining meat for consumption
3. Field trials
4. Hunting to observe or study wild mammals.

In response, a new type of hunting with dogs was invented as a smokescreen to allow hunts to continue to operate in a similar way to traditional hunting. 'Trail' hunting, as it is known, purports to involve the pursuit of a pre-laid animal-based scent rather than following the scent of a wild mammal.

By accident or by design, trail hunting results in wild mammals being chased and killed by packs of hounds, directly contravening the spirit of the Hunting Act.

Though the trail is supposedly laid in advance of the hunt setting out, the hounds are supposed to locate it and follow without assistance. Consequently, in pursuit of the pre-laid trail, the hounds can pick up the scent of a live wild animal and pursue it. This of course enables the hunting party to claim to be unaware that the hounds were following the scent of a live animal and that "accidents will happen".



## Fernie Hunt - judge dismisses appeal and convictions remain

A judge has dismissed an appeal by two hunt employees convicted of breaching hunting laws.

Huntsman Derek Hopkins and terrierman Kevin Allen, of the Harborough-based Fernie Hunt, were found guilty of hunting a live fox and digging into an active badger sett. However, the pair had maintained they were hunting an artificial trail when caught on film by hunt monitors.

They also claimed they had dug into a hole to shoot a fox that had gone to ground, not to release it so it could be hunted.

The pair both maintained they had examined the hole and believed it was not a badger sett in current use.

At the end of a five-day appeal into their convictions, Judge Michael Pert QC confirmed the convictions and accused the Fernie Hunt of using the "cover of trail hunting as a cynical subterfuge."

Judge Pert said: "It is clear to us that the hunt was hunting a live fox."

He said he and two magistrates were convinced that the hunt had dug into an active badger sett. He added: "We found Hopkins to be an unconvincing witness. We found Allen to be shifty and evasive."

However, he praised the objectivity of the four investigators from the League, who filmed the hunt on 27 January 2010.



<sup>1</sup> Schedule 1, Hunting Act 2004



## What is hunt havoc?

The impact of hunting with dogs on people, animals and communities is easily encompassed by the term hunt havoc.

Hunt havoc is defined by the League as: behaviour by a hunting party whether in whole or in part, and/or their hunting hounds and supporters, which causes nuisance, distress, danger or damage to other people, their animals, or their property.

The seven principal categories of hunt havoc are:

### 1. Road interference

When a hunt, hunt member or their vehicle, supporter, or their vehicle, or one or more hounds are on public roads during a hunt or during hound exercise. This extends to if they cause another animal to be on public roads during a hunt or during hound exercise.

### 2. Railway trespass

When a hunt, hunt member, or one or more hounds trespasses onto the railway during a hunt or during the exercising of hounds.

### 3. Other trespass and nuisance

When a hunt, hunt member, supporter, or one or more hound trespasses onto private property and/or causes nuisance on public property during a hunt or during hound exercising.

### 4. Livestock worrying

When a hunt, hunt member, supporter, or one or more hound causes livestock to become agitated in their presence or when one hound or more attacks livestock during a hunt or during hound exercise.

### 5. Harm and/or distress to domestic animals

When a hunt, hunt member, supporter, or one or more hound harms or worries a domestic animal during a hunt or during exercising the hounds. Domestic animals include horses.

### 6. Conduct of hunting party

Conduct of hunting party covers violence, threatening and/or irresponsible and/or unreasonable behaviour by the hunt, hunt member, or hunt supporter or during hound exercise.

### 7. Public mental distress

When a hunt, hunt member, supporter, or one or more hound causes a member of the public to witness events that cause them distress whether temporary or long-term.

At the time of publishing this report, there were 297 active hunts in Great Britain.<sup>2</sup> Of these, 191 are fox hunts, 81 are hare hunts/harriers (harriers focus their hunting activities on fox and hare), six are deer hunts and the remaining packs hunt other animals such as mink.

In terms of hunt havoc data, the League has focused on a time period between 1 January 2018 and 23 March 2022, which will hereafter be called the Relevant Period for the purposes of this report.

During the Relevant Period, the League has been made aware of at least 310 reports of hunt havoc incidents involving at least 101 hunts. Of those, 45 were collected during the latest hunting season between 20 October 2021 and 23 March 2022<sup>3</sup> and involved at least 29 different hunts. Due to how the League collects data, relying on reports from the public as well as its own intelligence gathering, the reports the charity does hold are believed to represent only a fraction of the true scale of the havoc hunts cause. Typically, a hunt will go hunting more than once a week, every week during the hunting season.



Some incidents involved more than one category of hunt havoc. To the extent that one incident involves multiple categories of hunt havoc, it has been recorded as a single incident for the purposes of coming to a total of 310 incidents. However, when a single incident involves multiple types of havoc, it has been included in the figures for each category relevant to it. For example, if one incident involves road interference, other trespass or nuisance and public mental distress, it is counted in the totals for each of those three categories of hunt havoc.

'...the reports the charity does hold are believed to represent only a fraction of the true scale of the havoc hunts cause.'



<sup>2</sup> According to data collected by the League Against Cruel Sports between 01/11/2021 and 31/03/2022.

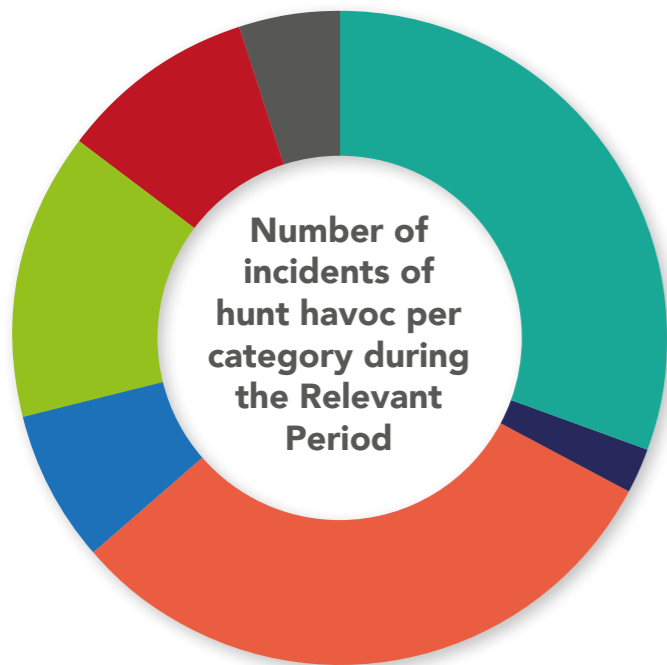
<sup>3</sup> So far as the League Against Cruel Sports is aware, there are no official start dates to the hunting season, although it typically falls between the end of October and early April. For the purposes of data collection, the League Against Cruel Sports chooses the date range of 1/11/YYYY to 31/03/YYYY as an accurate representation of the start and end of a typical hunting season. In this report, any reference to the 'last hunting season' refers to 20 October 2021 and 23 March 2022.



### Hunt havoc during the Relevant Period

The most common categories of hunt havoc in the Relevant Period were other trespass or nuisance (44 per cent) and road interference (44 per cent).

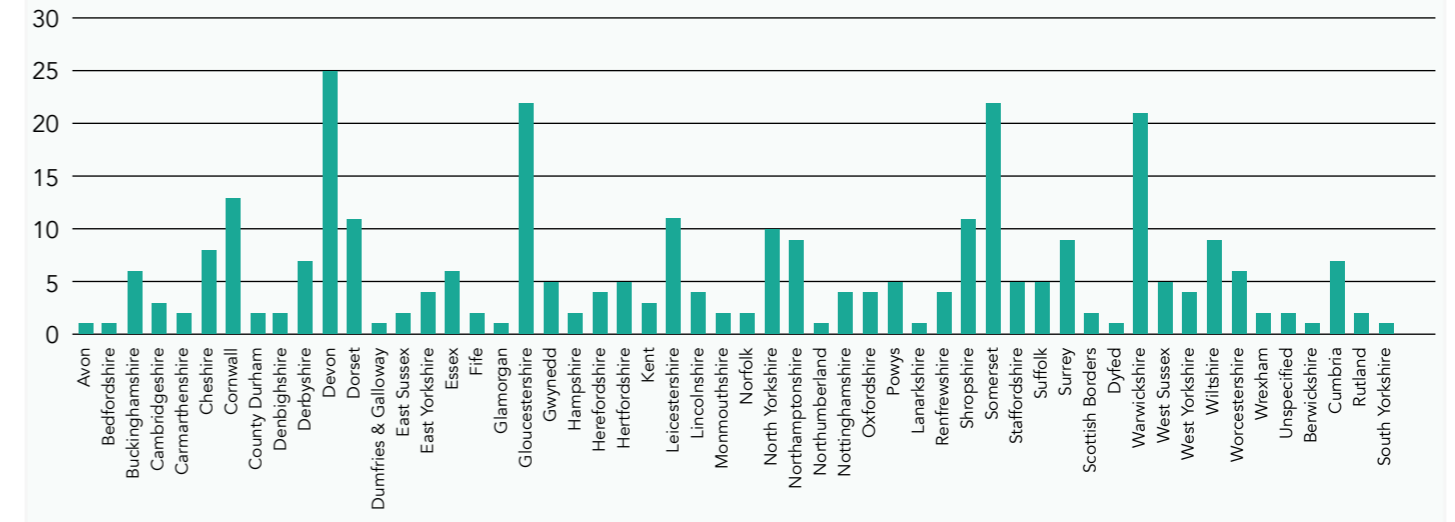
Devon is the county out of which arose the highest number of reports of hunt havoc of which the League is aware during the Relevant Period (25). Devon was followed closely by Somerset (22), Gloucestershire (22) and Warwickshire (21).



Hunt havoc type	No. of incidents
Road interference	135
Railway trespass	10
Other trespass or nuisance	136
Harm to domestic animals	32
Conduct of hunting party	63
Livestock worrying	42
Public mental distress	22



### Number of hunt havoc incidents per county during Relevant Period





## Why is hunt havoc of concern?

Principally, hunt havoc is either the result of overt illegal hunting with dogs or trail hunting.

Trail hunts purport to pre-lay an animal-based scent for their hounds to follow. If trail hunting was real, it would not result in hunt havoc as trails would not be laid across private land, railway tracks and roads.

Most commonly, hunts attribute these incidents to hounds 'accidentally' catching the scent of a live animal. While contravening the spirit of the law, this is one way the hunts can carry on their old-fashioned illegal hunting with impunity. Therefore, the Hunting Act 2004 needs to be strengthened to ensure this is no longer a possibility.

Hunting not only raises animal welfare concerns but also negatively impacts on members of public around the country. While the League has identified seven categories of hunt havoc, the common thread between incidents in all categories is failure to adhere to the law, a lack of consideration for others and distress caused to humans and animals alike. Some categories of hunt havoc involve incidents that are chargeable under legislation other than the Hunting Act 2004 and which can also lead to civil claims in trespass and damage to property. Whether incidents involve a breach of the law or not, they all negatively impact upon people either by causing people bodily or financial harm, fear, grief and/or inconvenience. Based on the incident reports that the League is aware of, public safety has been put at risk at least 145<sup>4</sup> times during the Relevant Period.



<sup>4</sup>The number of road interference incidents and railways trespass incidents combined.



# Road interference

Overall, during the Relevant Period, the League is aware of at least 135 reports of hunt havoc involving road interference. Nearly half (44 per cent) of all hunt havoc incidents involved instances of road interference. Consequently, road interference is one of the two most prevalent categories of hunt havoc.

Seven of these incidents resulted in the death of at least one hunting hound and a further two incidents resulted in injuries to hunting hounds from colliding with motorists. One of the incidents reported in the Oxford Mail involved the death of two deer that had been chased onto an A road by the Heythrop Hunt<sup>5</sup> and had also resulted in one car being written off and very distressed drivers. More than 90 of the active hunts in the United Kingdom were involved in road interference incidents during the Relevant Period.

Data shows 18 incidents of road interference occurred during the last hunting season and involved at least 12 different hunts<sup>6</sup> across at least 11 different counties<sup>7</sup>. At least 10 road interference incidents occurred on A roads<sup>8</sup>. Gov.uk defines A roads as "major roads intended to provide large-scale transport links within or between areas". One of these 18 incidents involved a hunt crossing an A road junction through a red traffic light, potentially creating a significant risk to road users as well as the members of the hunting party and their hounds.



The national speed limit in the UK is 60-70 miles per hour depending on whether roads are single or dual carriageway. The presence of hunts and/or their hounds on roads, particularly on A roads and other similar main roads, undoubtedly poses risks: risks to the physical safety of the hunting party, their hounds and motorists.

## Case Study: Minehead Harriers

In November 2021, the Minehead Harriers hunt spilled out of fields onto a main A road and a member of the hunt began shouting at cars to slow down. A motorist left her vehicle to exchange words with the hunt as a result of the disruption. As part of the same incident, the Exmoor ponies were frightened by the hunt onto a road.



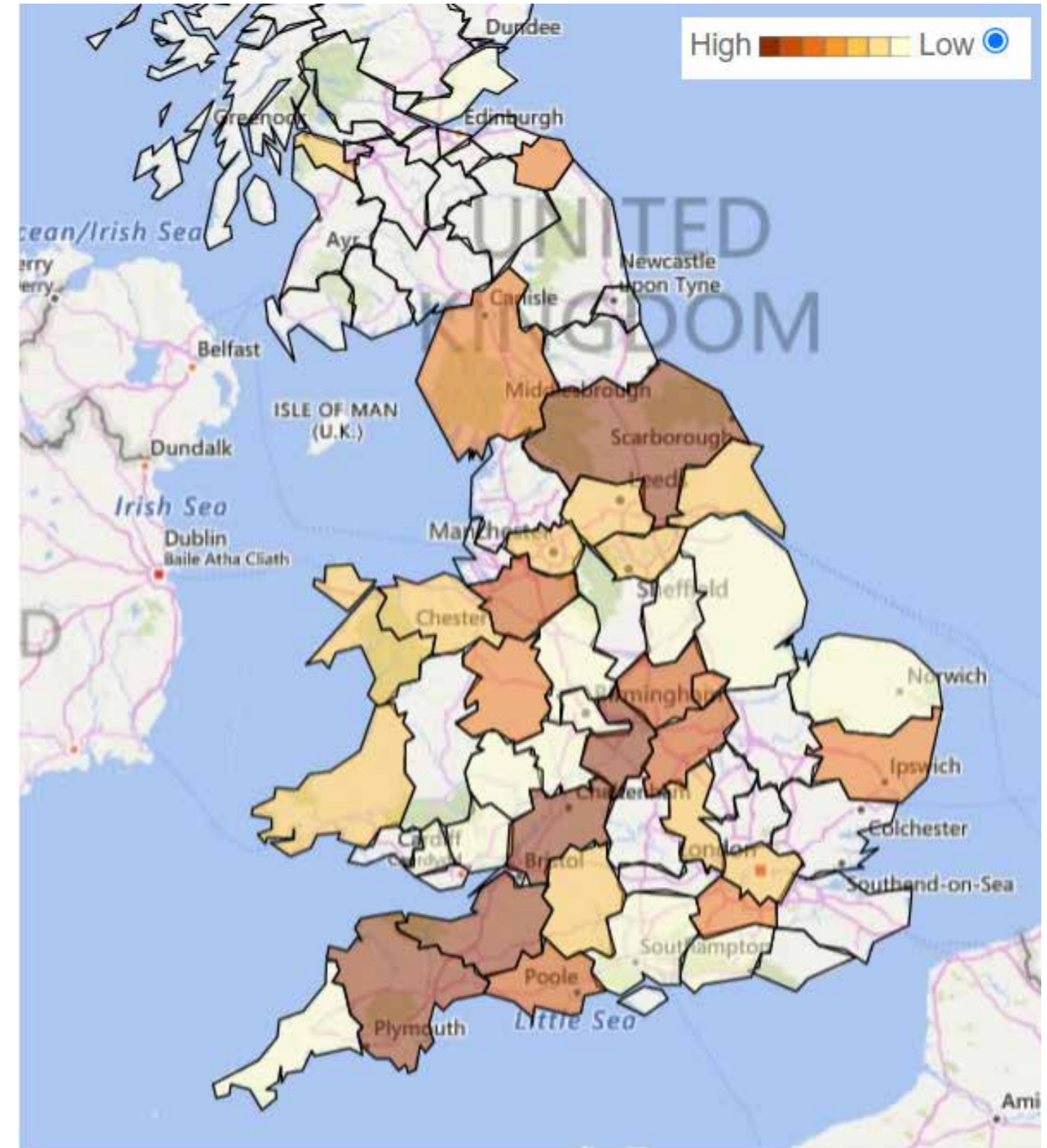
<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/18805513.heythrop-hunt-accused-causing-carnage-crash-killed-deer/>

<sup>6</sup> Tiverton Staghounds, Crawley & Horsham Hunt, Herefordshire Hunt, Minehead Harriers, West Somerset Hunt, Warwickshire, Torrington Farmers, Pennine Hunt, Fernie Hunt, North Staffordshire Hunt, Cattistock Hunt, South Shropshire Hunt.

<sup>7</sup> Somerset, Warwickshire, Devon, West Yorkshire, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Cheshire, Dorset, Shropshire, Herefordshire and West Sussex.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-road-classification-and-the-primary-route-network/guidance-on-road-classification-and-the-primary-route-network>

The highest number of reports of road interference during the Relevant Period were in Gloucestershire (15), closely followed by Warwickshire (13).





# Railway trespass

The League is aware of at least ten reports of railway trespass during the Relevant Period. Three of these incidents occurred during the last hunting season. At least eight different hunts were involved in the ten incidents of railway trespass and two of the incidents involved the Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt in Somerset.

Six of these ten incidents of railway trespass resulted in one or more hunting hounds being hit by a train. At least five of these six incidents resulted in the death of at least one hound.

At least four of these ten incidents resulted in significant delays to train services, lasting at least 90 minutes in duration.

One of the incidents occurred in front of children who were traumatised from witnessing a hound being hit and reportedly paralysed if not killed as a result of the collision.

If hunts or their hounds trespass onto the railway, this causes:

1. delays
2. risks the physical safety of the hunting hounds
3. risks the physical safety of members of the public who are travelling on the trains.

It also poses a risk to the mental health of the drivers who may have to witness extremely distressing accidents<sup>9</sup>. At least one of the drivers of the six trains involved in collisions with hunting hounds was very upset and reportedly had to be consoled by others as a result of hitting multiple hunting hounds.

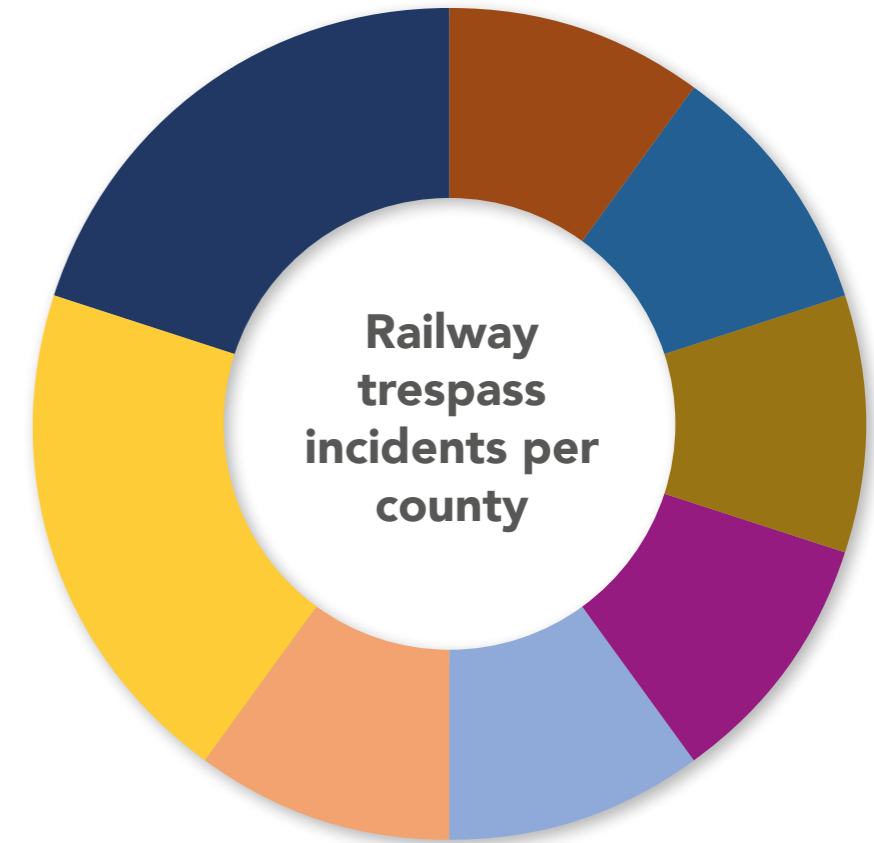
Railway trespass of hunts and their hounds is an ongoing concern. In May 2020, the Daily Mirror wrote an article titled 'Hunts endangering train passengers by straying onto railways', warn campaigners, which explained that **Network Rail had recorded at least five incidents of railway trespass involving hunts or hunt hounds in just one month in 2020<sup>10</sup>**. The same article also carried a warning from Network Rail's head of public and passenger safety, who said: "Trespassing on the railway is dangerous and illegal – no exceptions. [...] It risks terrible injuries to the people and animals involved, delays essential transport of passengers and freight, and could even derail a train."

## Case study: Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt

On New Year's Day 2022, four hounds belonging to the Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt were killed by a train after running onto the railway line near Templecombe during a hunt. As well as the tragedy of hound fatalities, this incident also resulted in significant delays to rail services as trains were forced to run at a reduced speed until it was confirmed that the track was clear and safe. Luckily, no people were injured as a result of the incident, but a Network Rail spokesperson made it clear that this was a very real risk: "Trespassing on the railway is not only incredibly dangerous, but it's also illegal. It risks terrible injuries to the people and animals involved, as well as causing unnecessary delays to passengers."



The highest number of railway trespass reports during the Relevant Period were in Somerset (2) and Gloucestershire (2).



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/hunts-endangering-train-passengers-straying-22102611>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/hunts-endangering-train-passengers-straying-22102611>



## Other trespass or nuisance

Joint with road interference, this is the most prolific category of hunt havoc. 44 per cent of all hunt havoc incidents involved instances of other trespass or nuisance.

Overall, during the Relevant Period, the League is aware of at least 136 incidents of hunt havoc involving other trespass and/or nuisance. These incidents of trespass occurred across a variety of sites including a nursing home, residential gardens, golf courses, farms, a hotel, Ministry of Defence land, a scheduled monument, schools and important conservation, wildlife and animal protection sites. For example, at least:

1. three of the incidents of trespass involved animal sanctuaries
2. two of the incidents of trespass were on Sites of Special Scientific Interest
3. 11 of the incidents of trespass were across National Trust or Forestry Commission land
4. five of the incidents of trespass were across nature reserves.

One incident involved the disruption of a funeral where hounds belonging to the Quorn Hunt are reported to have chased a fox through a burial ground in Loughborough, leaping over an open grave. The incident was reported by Leicestershire Live<sup>11</sup> where a female mourner recalled hearing "galloping horses, trumpet blowing and shouting" as she was talking to the minister at the service. She added: "The next minute we watched as a hunt unfolded

before our eyes. We were all mortified to watch." The managing director for the Natural Burial Company, which runs the site, said the company "do not allow the hunt access to the burial ground and our team were shocked and saddened by this incident".

Another incident involved a hunting hound from the Warwickshire Hunt actually entering a residential house where a six-month-old baby was on the floor at the time. The Mail Online reported on the incident in 2018<sup>12</sup> recording how the pack of hounds 'were captured [on video] digging under fences and swarming through the village of Oxhill'. The lady whose house was trespassed into was quoted saying: "I have just had an altercation with Warwickshire Hunt at my property where not only did a massive fox hound get into my garden but also entered my house where my six-month-old baby is on the floor in a baby walker. Thankfully we got to her before it did, we have reported it to the police and I am waiting for the officer to attend now, I am shaken and beyond furious."

After another incident of trespass in 2018 involved a pack of out-of-control hounds from the Bicester Hunt with Whaddon Chase running uncontrollably through private property. A resident was quoted as saying "It was a bit shocking, really. The hounds are really big and although they don't bother me, it could be quite frightening for the children. [...]"<sup>13</sup>

At least five incidents involved damage to property (most commonly garden fences) caused by hunting hounds.



### Case Study: Eggesford Hunt

In March 2022, a couple wrote to their local police after a hunt and their hounds 'rampaged' through their property in an act of trespass. The couple described the hunt hounds as running 'loose and uncontrolled' across their and their neighbours' land. Members of the hunting party also running across the couple's land ignored requests from the couple that they leave immediately and shouted abuse at the couple. One hunt member insisted they had previously served in the army and said to the couple 'if the bombs start to drop, I certainly won't be protecting you'.

In addition to the obvious trespass, according to the couple, this was also a clear instance of illegal fox hunting where the hunt was 'pursuing a live quarry or quarries'. Since the land was private, no trails could possibly have been laid across it for the purposes of trail hunting.

The hunt and hounds had also trespassed across into neighbouring property, where an equine event was being held. In the letter to the police, the couple described their neighbours as being 'alarmed, harassed and very distressed at having their event ruined and their health and safety and the well-being of their animals being put at such risk by the actions of the hunt'.

Their letter ends saying:

'At no point did I hear, see or observe any attempt by the hunt to maintain proper control of their hounds. In fact, the only explanation for what I observed happening was either that they were at best completely incompetent and unprofessional with regards to keeping proper control of their pack – or at worst they were deliberately and illegally hunting.'

The whole incident left my wife and myself feeling very distressed by the arrogance of the huntsmen and their complete lack of respect for our home and our property. Along with our daughter and her husband, we often spend time in our fields and woodland along with our three-year-old grandson. The fact that these individuals feel they have some sort of right to come and go as they please with their dogs, harassing us and our family and putting our safety and the safety of our grandson at risk – all so that they can indulge in potentially illegal activity is beyond belief.'



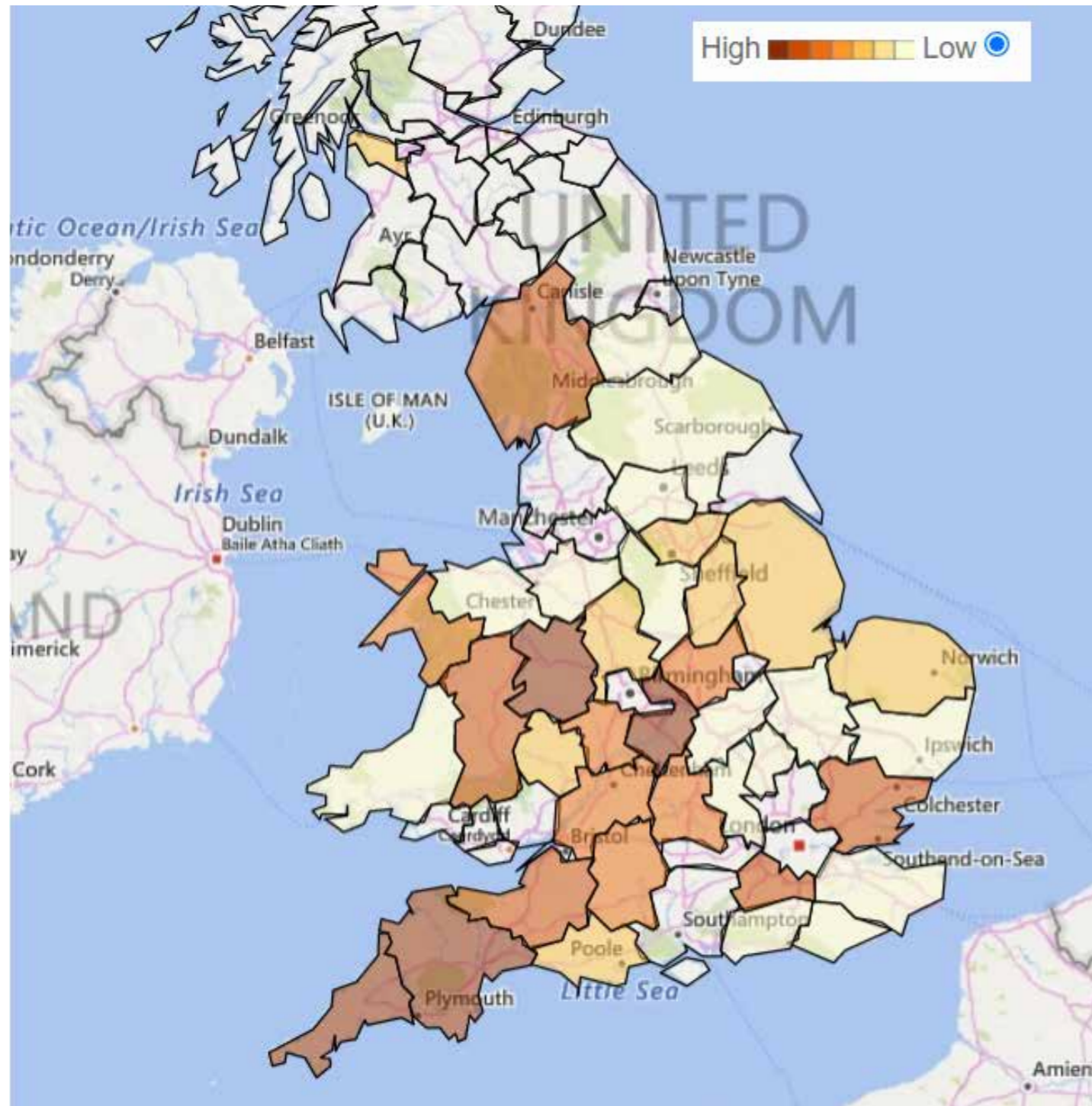
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/mourner-says-pack-hounds-chasing-3664590>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5270815/Hunt-saboteurs-film-hounds-rampaging-gardens.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://twitter.com/HoundsOff/status/959523070804455424/photo/1>



The highest number of reports of trespass and/or nuisance in the Relevant Period were in Devon (13), closely followed by Warwickshire (10), Somerset (8) and Cornwall (8).





# Harm and/or distress to domestic animals

The League is aware of at least 32 incidents of harm and/or distress being caused to domestic animals by hunts during the Relevant Period, which represents 1 in 10 of all recorded incidents. Seven of these incidents involved a direct attack or attempted attack upon a domestic animal by hunting hounds. One incident resulted in a pet being euthanised<sup>14</sup>. Another one of these incidents forced a dog owner to kick out at hunting hounds in an attempt to defend her pet dog from a number of hounds who had circled her and attempting to attack her dog.



## Case study: Western Hunt

In March 2021, an elderly pet cat named Minnie was attacked and killed by the Western Hunt's pack of hounds leaving Minnie's family traumatised. The incident was reported by the media, with Minnie's owner recalling seeing Minnie being "grabbed and shaken" and describing the impact this has had on the family.

She said: "I am absolutely devastated and heartbroken and I cannot imagine the suffering she has gone through. [...] My children are not sleeping at all at night, and they are so upset and terrified of it happening to another one of our pets"<sup>15</sup>.

Following the incident, a magistrates' court fined the hunt master, ordering him to pay £775 in costs, a £48 victim surcharge and £350 in compensation to Minnie's family. The incident prompted national uproar and a petition was launched to 'protect the public and animals from hunting animals'. The petition reached 101,996 signatures.

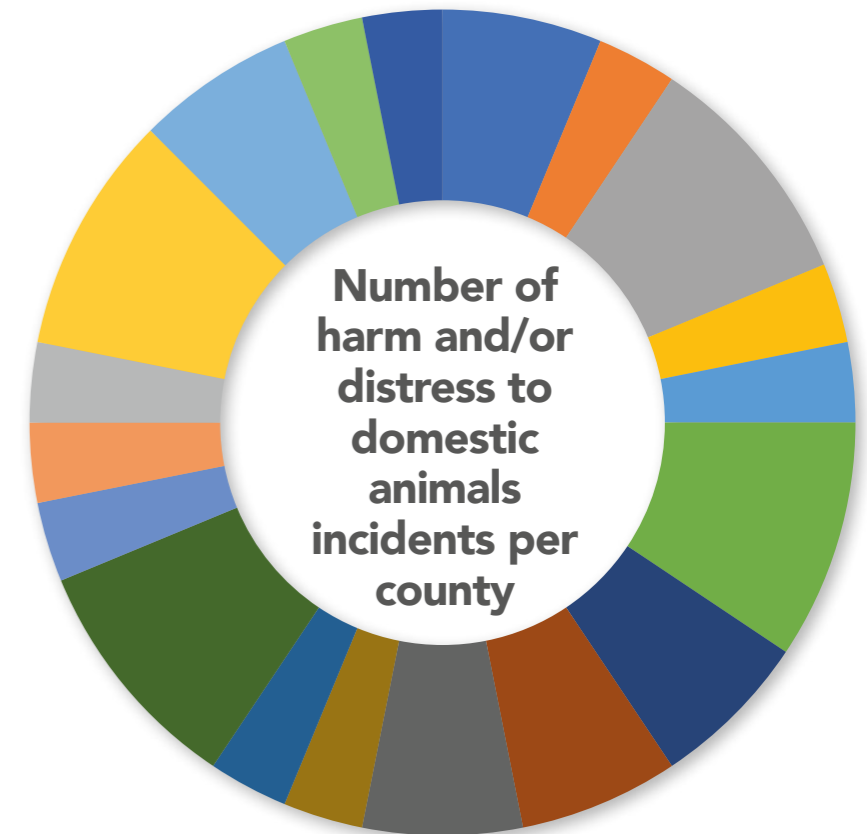


## Case study: Essex and Suffolk Hunt

In January 2022, a family had to make the difficult decision to euthanise their pet horse due to hunt havoc. About 40<sup>16</sup> hounds from the Essex and Suffolk Hunt trespassed onto private land while out hunting and panicked Barney, a 21-year-old horse, causing him to bolt straight through a gate and break his leg. He was found by his owner after having lay 'for at least 40 minutes in pain on his own'.

Over the Relevant Period, the highest number of reports for harm to domestic animals were recorded in Devon (3), Somerset (3), Essex (3) and Shropshire (3).

Norfolk	2
East Sussex	1
Devon	3
Nottinghamshire	1
West Sussex	1
Somerset	3
Worcestershire	2
Powys	2
Hertfordshire	2
East Yorkshire	1
Gwynedd	1
Essex	3
Surrey	1
Gloucestershire	1
Cheshire	1
Shropshire	3
Cornwall	2
West Yorkshire	1
Oxfordshire	1



<sup>14</sup> [https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/19848703.horse-put-bolting-fox-hunt-hounds/?fbclid=IwAR3TGdJhbZvrywbXXBAhr683ZVjD4T437qR13ubQ7ezc3iVKuh\\_VgQxpJqk](https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/19848703.horse-put-bolting-fox-hunt-hounds/?fbclid=IwAR3TGdJhbZvrywbXXBAhr683ZVjD4T437qR13ubQ7ezc3iVKuh_VgQxpJqk)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-58843059>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/19848703.horse-put-bolting-fox-hunt-hounds/?fbclid=IwAR3TGdJhbZvrywbXXBAhr683ZVjD4T437qR13ubQ7ezc3iVKuh\\_VgQxpJqk](https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/19848703.horse-put-bolting-fox-hunt-hounds/?fbclid=IwAR3TGdJhbZvrywbXXBAhr683ZVjD4T437qR13ubQ7ezc3iVKuh_VgQxpJqk)



## Conduct of hunting party

The League is aware of at least 64 incidents of hunt havoc during the Relevant Period involving concerns around the conduct of the hunting party, representing 21 per cent of the data. Although arguably the conduct of the hunting party is always a concern in all types of hunt havoc. At least 52 of these incidents involved the use of physical violence and/or intimidation and/or verbal abuse by the hunting party and/or hunt supporters<sup>17</sup>. One such incident left a person unconscious<sup>18</sup>. At least 18 of the incidents involved property damage or theft caused by the hunting party and/or hunt supporters. Incidents also included a breach of licence by the hunting party and/or hunt supporters on Forestry Commission land.



### Case study: Eggesford Hunt

In the same incident set out above under the other trespass and nuisance category of hunt havoc, there was hunt havoc involving the conduct of the hunting party. The woman upon whose land the hunt had trespassed was made to feel frightened, fearing physical violence by members of the hunt. After the hounds had left her land, a couple of men from the hunt rode up to her and her neighbour and one behaved particularly threateningly. Her letter to the police describes the moment: 'I felt very fearful that he was about to be violent towards my neighbour and so I made a point of filming him in case anything happened. When he realised I was filming he marched back to me, pushed his body and face right up to mine in a very aggressive and threatening fashion and then used his fist to smash the camera and water bottle that I was holding in my hand'.

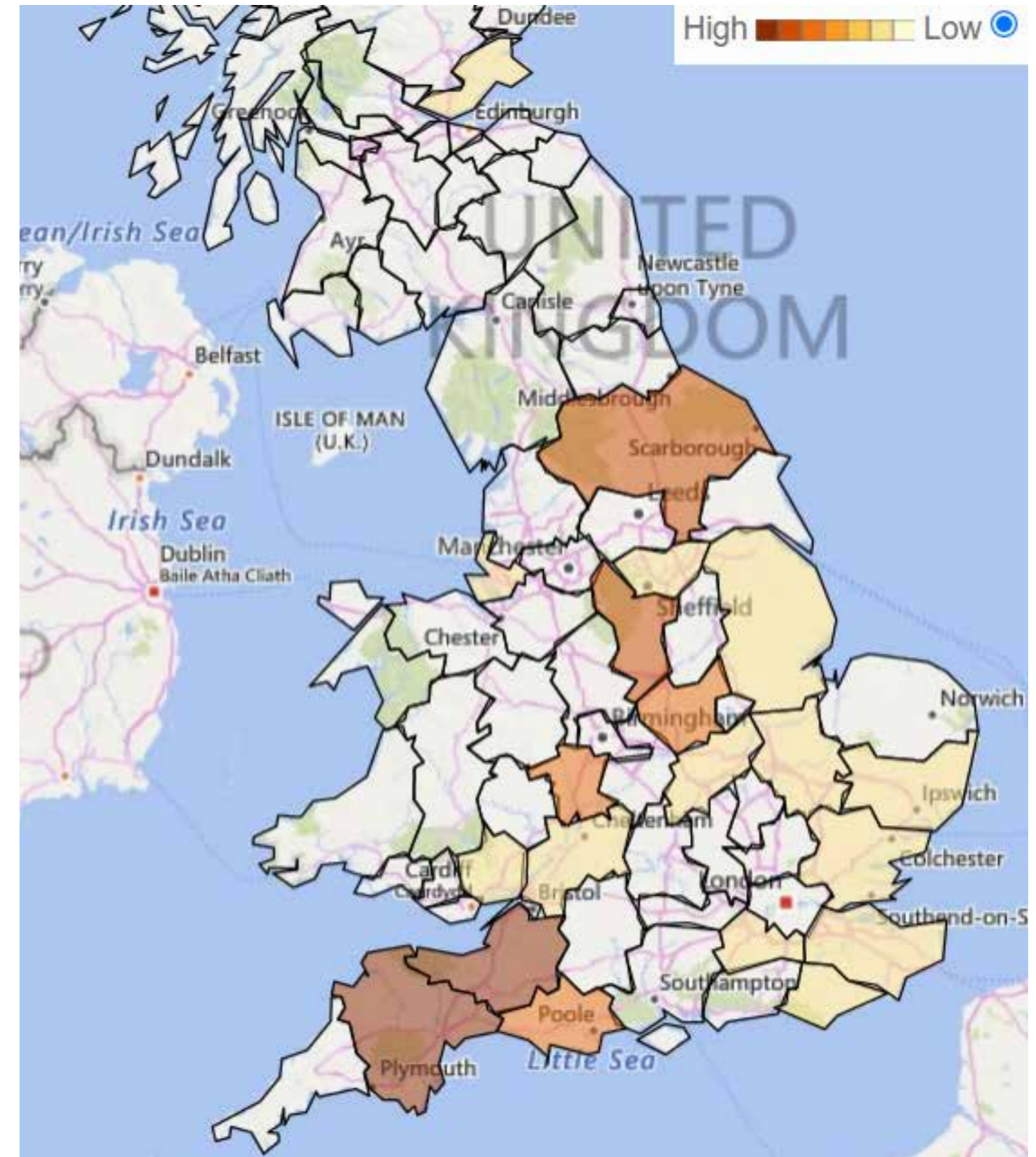
### Case study: Blackmore and Spark Vale Hunt

In November 2021, the Blackmore and Spark Vale Hunt's hounds mauled a deer leaving it with gruesome injuries. Though fatally injured, the deer did not die immediately and the kindest way to help the deer would have been to euthanise it. The Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt refused to cooperate with monitors who were pleading with them to shoot the deer to end its suffering. The Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt left the deer in this terrible condition and moved off to continue hunting. Meanwhile, the monitors waited with the deer for the police to arrive who were then able to call their Firearms Unit in to relieve its suffering.

<sup>17</sup> Some hunt supporters are paid expenses by the hunt to sabotage hunt monitors' attempts to record a hunt in progress and some are linked to terriermen.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/hunt-saboteur-seriously-hurt-after-1070248>

Over the Relevant Period, the highest number of reports of concerns regarding the conduct of hunting parties during the last hunting season were in Devon (7), Somerset (5) and Dorset (5).





# Public mental distress

The League is aware of at least 22 incidents of hunt havoc during the Relevant Period that can be categorised as having evidently caused mental distress to members of the public. This means seven per cent of all hunt havoc incidents involved obvious distress to members of the public.

The hunt havoc incidents that have resulted in public distress cover witnessing trespass, witnessing suspected illegal hunting, witnessing harm to domestic animals, witnessing conduct of the hunting party and road interference.

It is possible that more than 22 incidents have resulted in public mental distress as, arguably, all categories of hunt havoc cause distress to those involved whether through trespass on private land, pets and farm animals being put at risk, or the safety of road and rail users being compromised.

At least two of the 22 incidents involved young children who were deeply distressed by what they witnessed including a hound being hit by a train and multiple hounds covered in blood and howling outside of a school having presumably killed a wild animal.

## Case study: Heythrop Hunt

In October 2020, the Heythrop Hunt scared two deer onto a busy A road resulting in their deaths as they were hit by a car. Members of the public were witnessed crying at the distressing scene of the dead deer on the road.

## Case study: Fernie Hunt

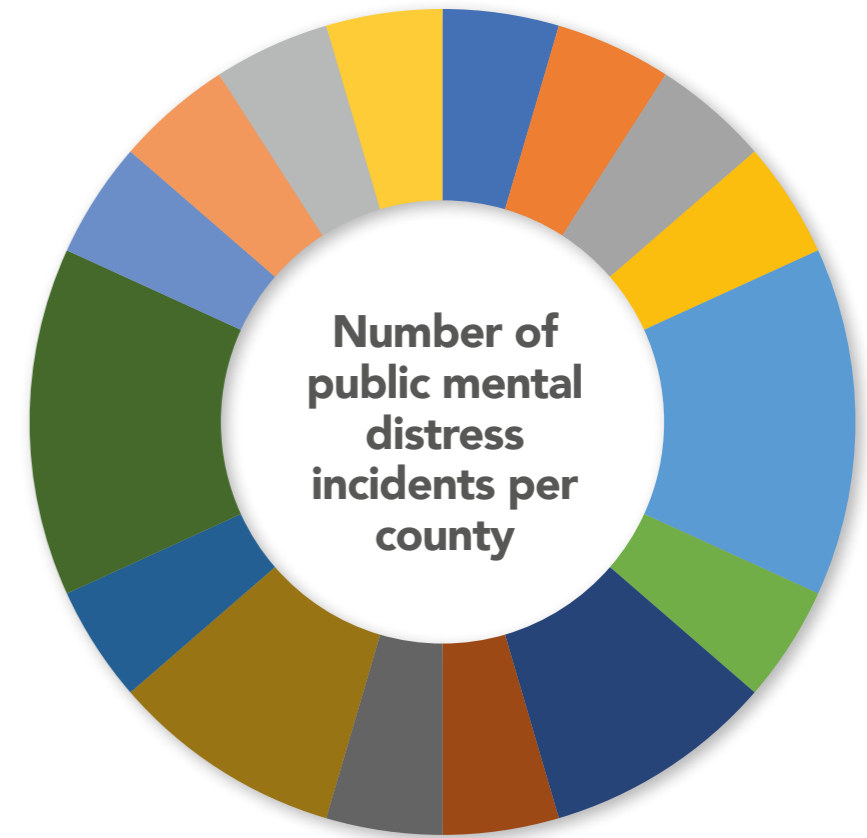
In January, a couple were left shocked and upset after they saw the Fernie Hunt chasing a fox out of a field and through the village of Peatling Parva<sup>19</sup>. As well as being distressed by the sight of illegal fox hunting, they described the situation as 'totally chaotic' as members of the hunting party on horses were blocking the road forcing them to stop their car. One of the witnesses said: "I've never witnessed anything like it before. I cried all the way home."<sup>20</sup>

## Case study: South Shropshire Hunt

In January 2022, the South Shropshire Hunt was seen by a League professional investigator having lost control of at least some of their hounds which were described as 'frenzied'. A number of the hounds surrounded a lady walking her pet dog. The lady tried to shield her dog under her coat and the hounds continued to snap at her in attempts to get to her dog. The hounds only stopped when they picked up a scent and left to rejoin the rest of the pack of hounds.



Over the Relevant Period, the highest number of reports for public mental distress were in Somerset (3) and Cornwall (3).



Powys	1	Devon	2	Northumberland	1
Warwickshire	1	Cambridgeshire	1	Leicestershire	1
Avon	1	Oxfordshire	1	Essex	1
Lincolnshire	1	Gloucestershire	2	Shropshire	1
Somerset	3	Berwickshire	1		
Denbighshire	1	Cornwall	3		



<sup>19</sup> <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/local-news/i-cried-whole-way-home-6464036>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/local-news/i-cried-whole-way-home-6464036>



# Livestock worrying

The League Against Cruel Sports is aware of reports of at least 42 incidents of hunt havoc involving livestock worrying in the Relevant Period. This represents 14% of all hunt havoc incidents.

At the time of writing, the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill<sup>21</sup> is making its way through parliament and will introduce better protections for livestock and their owners from livestock worrying with new offences. Despite this, the current proposed draft Bill allows for an exemption from these offences for hunting hounds. However, this report shows that livestock worrying is a regular category of havoc caused by hunts.



## Case study: North Cotswold Hunt and

In February 2022, approximately 30 hunting hounds from the North Cotswold Hunt trespassed onto an animal sanctuary<sup>22</sup>. The sanctuary later published a newsletter covering, amongst other updates, the trespass. The newsletter said: 'they [the hounds] ran through our paddocks, through our sheep, through our horses, causing all of them to race around in alarm. They moved on into a neighbour's field and raced through his flock of ewes and young lambs'. The sanctuary wrote that it intended to seek compensation for the stress caused to its animals.

## Case study: Meynell and South Staffordshire Hunt

In March 2019, the Meynell & South Staffordshire Hunt hounds rioted through a field of sheep and two of the hounds broke from the pack and attacked a young lamb as it was trying to flee. The incident was reported by the Daily Mail<sup>23</sup> which recorded that luckily 'the lamb survived the attack but needed treatment for nasty puncture wounds it had suffered'. Members of the hunt were described as doing nothing to intervene.

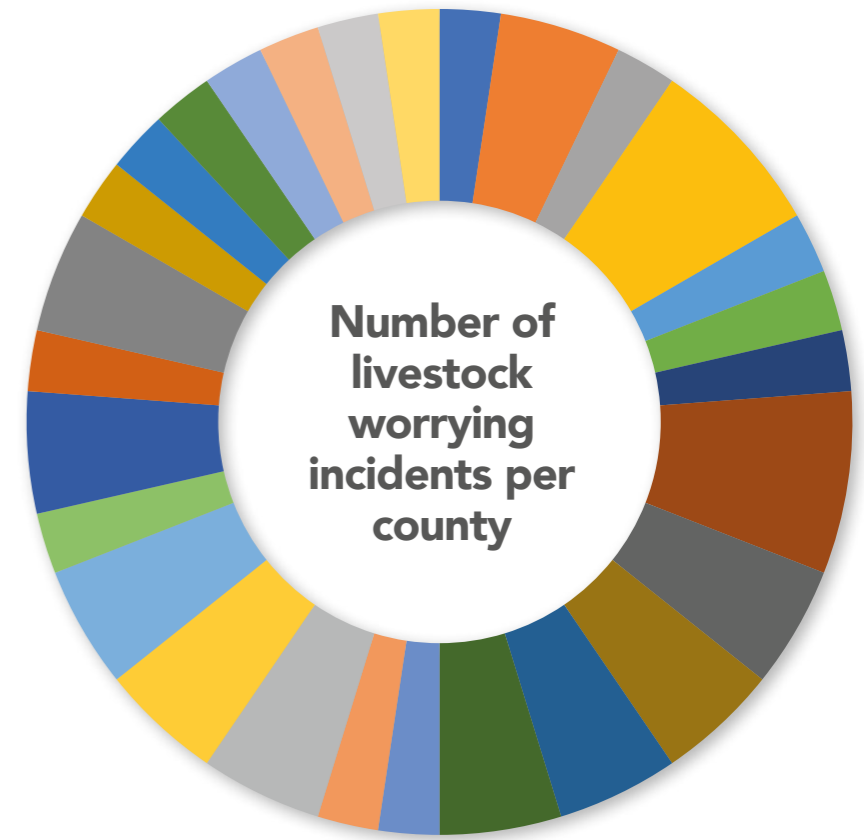


<sup>21</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0002/220002.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> 'Out of control' hunt hounds run through animal sanctuary | Evesham Journal

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6808243/Shocking-moment-foxhounds-rampage-field-sheep-maul-lamb.html>

The highest number of livestock worrying reports during the Relevant Period were in Somerset (2) and Hertfordshire (2).



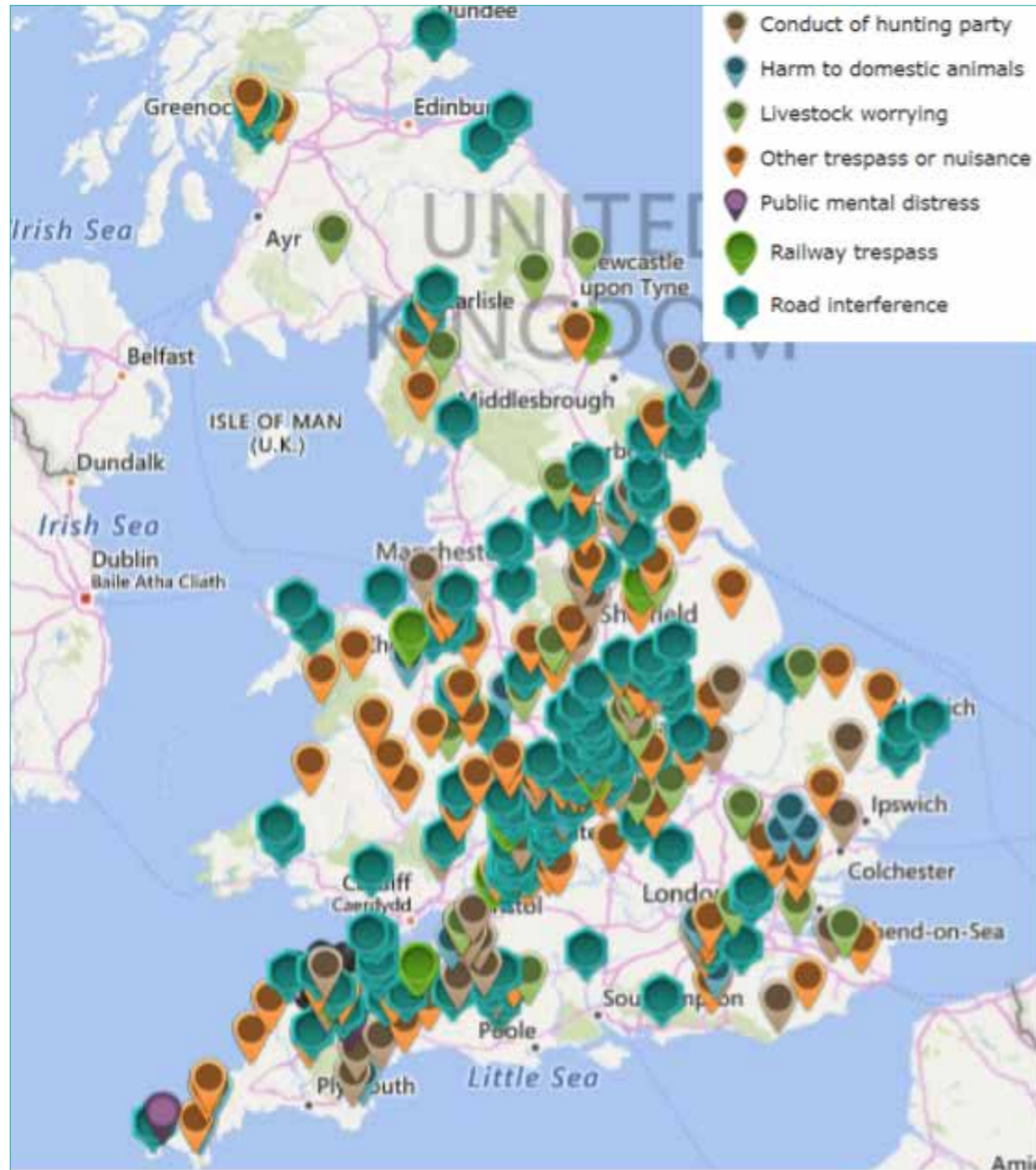
Nottinghamshire	1	East Yorkshire	2
Buckinghamshire	2	Leicestershire	2
Kent	1	Gwynedd	2
Hertfordshire	3	East Sussex	1
Dumfries & Galloway	1	Oxfordshire	2
Wiltshire	1	West Sussex	1
Northamptonshire	1	Devon	2
Somerset	3	Renfrewshire	1
Cumbria	2	Shropshire	1
Gloucestershire	2	Herefordshire	1
Wrexham	2	Northumberland	1
Derbyshire	2	Powys	1
Surrey	1	West Yorkshire	1
Dorset	1	Norfolk	1



# Geographical spread of incidents

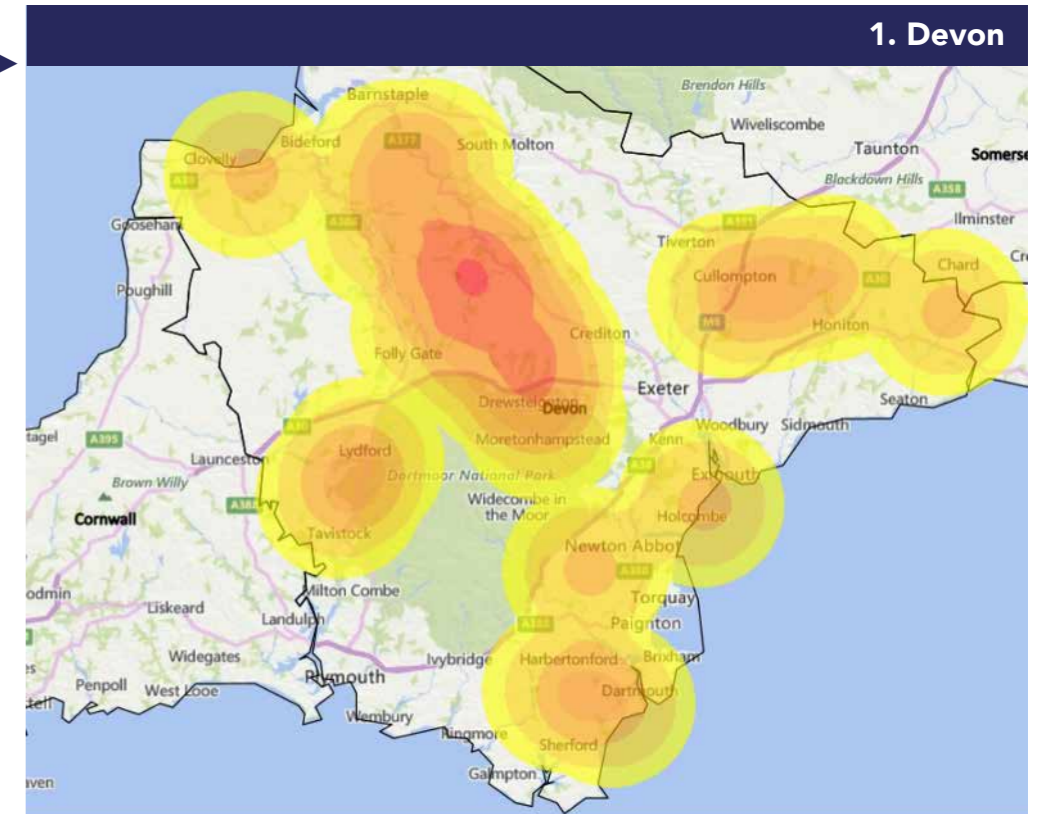
This report identifies 310 incidents of hunt havoc across 53 counties between 1 January 2018 and 23 March 2022. The geographical spread of incidents is illustrated in the map below.

## National View

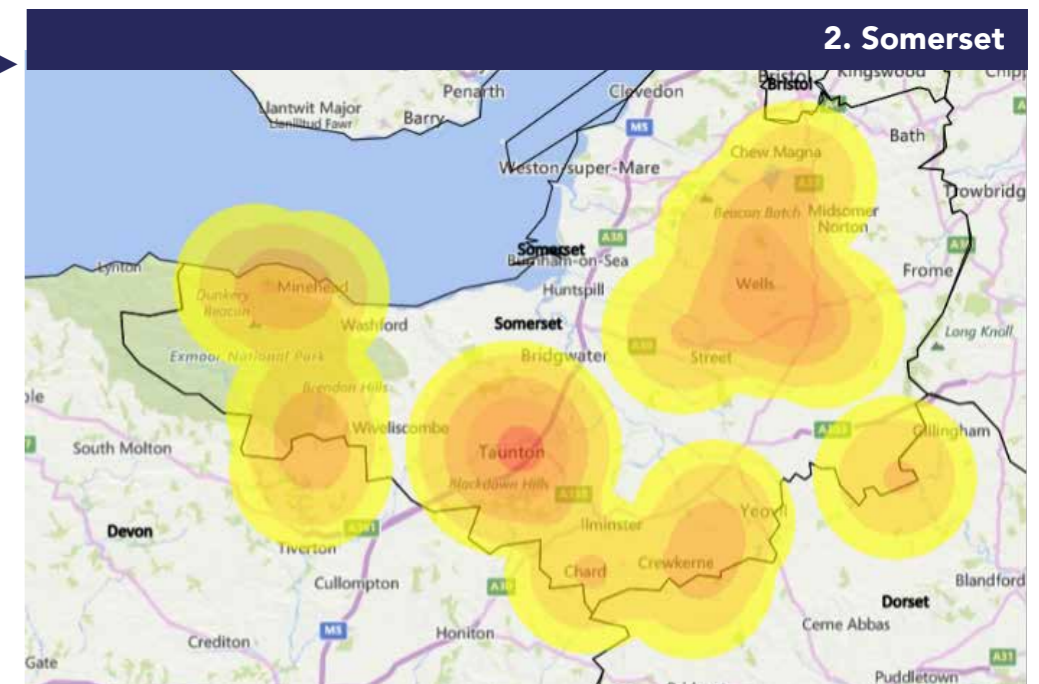


## Top four counties for hunt havoc

Devon is the county with the highest number of reports of hunt havoc at 25. The most frequent categories of havoc are other trespass (13) and road interference (8).

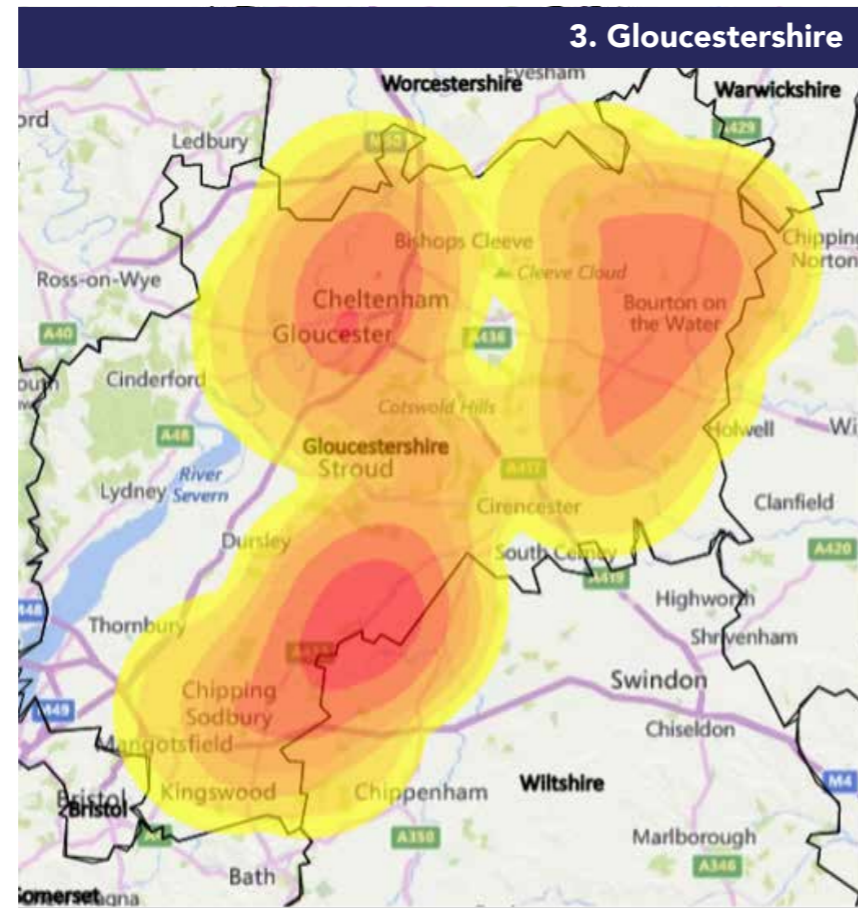


Somerset is the county with the second highest number of reports of hunt havoc at 22. The most frequent categories of havoc are other trespass (8) and road interference (8).

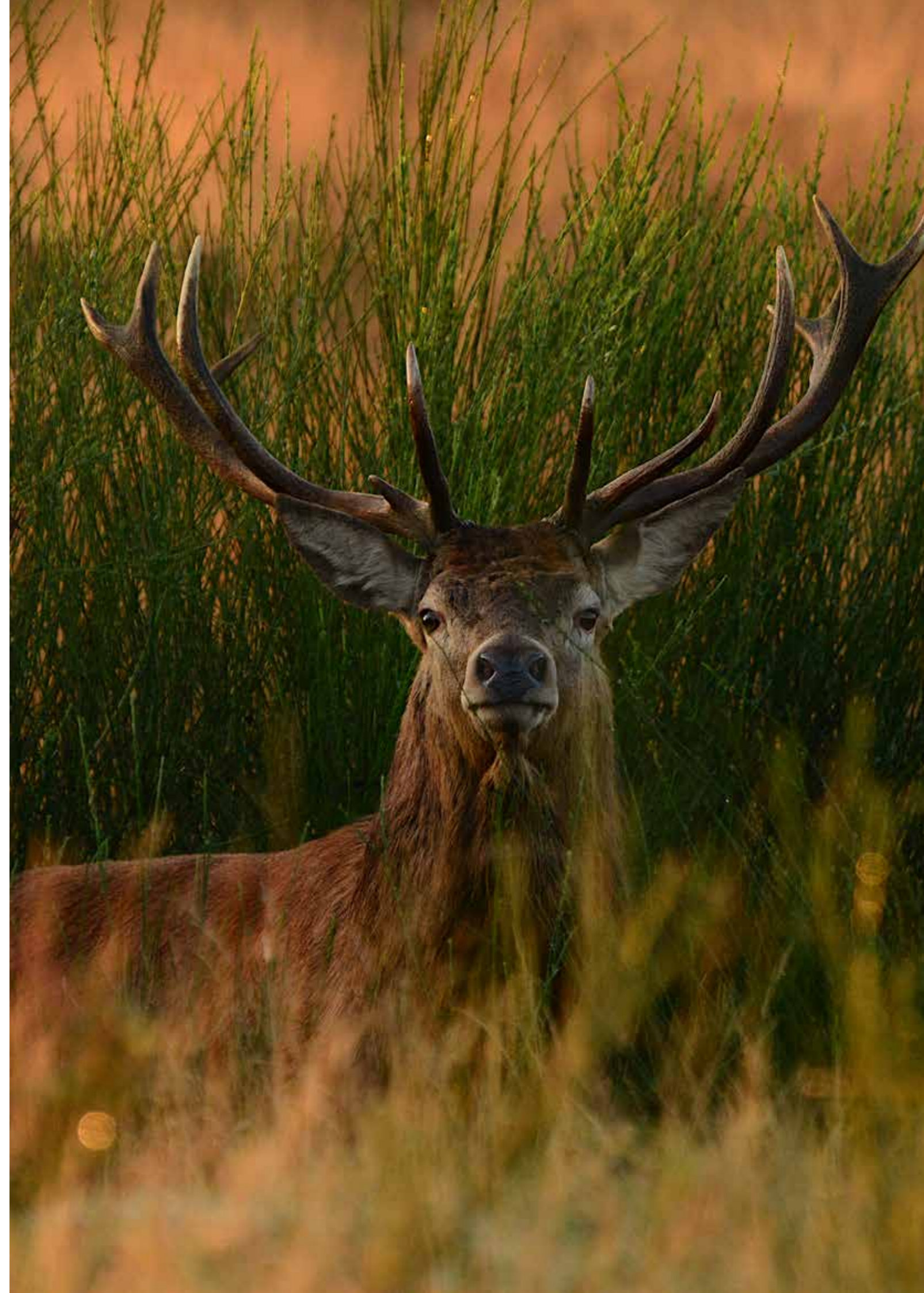
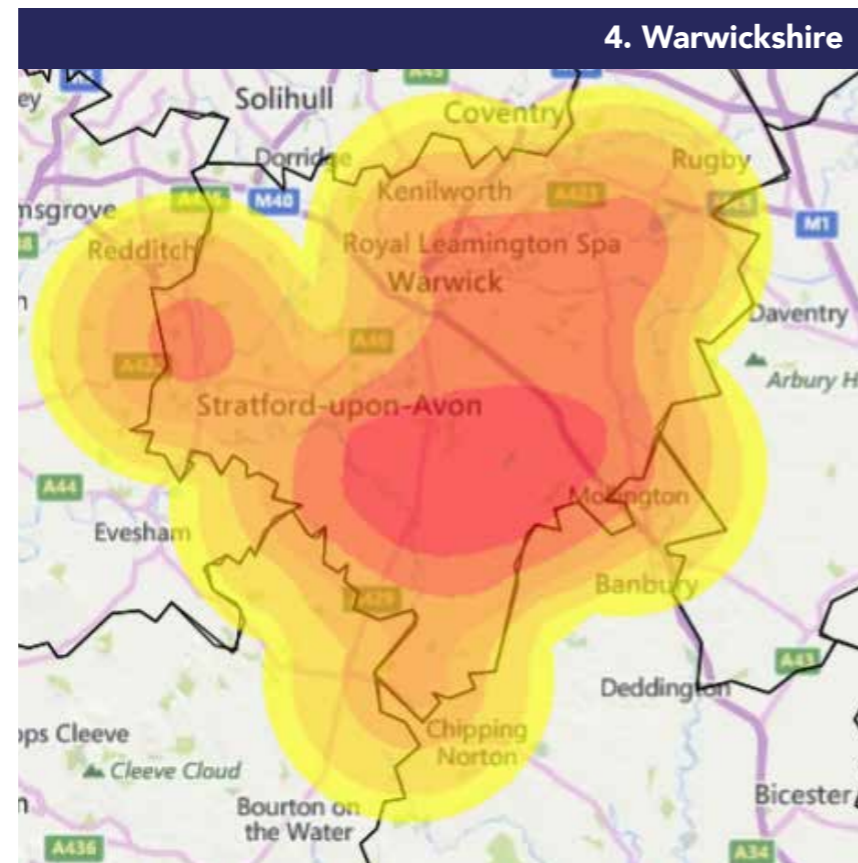




Gloucestershire is the county with the joint second highest number of reports of hunt havoc at 22. The most frequent categories of havoc are road interference (15) and other trespass (6).



Warwickshire is the county with the fourth highest number of reports of hunt havoc at 21. The most frequent categories of havoc are road interference (13) and other trespass (10).





## Conclusion

The League Against Cruel Sports believes the Hunting Act 2004 must be strengthened to prevent hunting with dogs. Hunting with dogs is still prolific in the countryside, although it is allegedly an accidental by-product of trail hunting.

We believe that this report is evidence that hunting, even hunting permitted under the exemptions within Schedule One of the Hunting Act 2004, is not only an animal welfare issue but a public safety and nuisance issue.

Based on the findings of this report hunt havoc is a very real concern impacting communities nationwide: communities in at least **53 counties** are **affected by hunt havoc and public safety has been put at risk** at least **145** times during the Relevant Period.

**We believe this is only a small part of the true scale of the havoc hunts cause.**

**We are calling for the Hunting Act 2004 to be strengthened to better protect not only wild animals but the British public, their property, and right to enjoy the countryside in peace.**











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