

2002 Act Review
Natural Resources Division The Scottish Government
1-C North, Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

25th March 2016

Dear Lord Bonomy and colleagues,

Please find evidence for the 2002 Act Review in the proceeding pages.

Mr. Chris Strickland





Professional Huntsman Johnny Richardson of the Jedforest Hunt exercises hounds in the Rule Water on a hot summers day. Hound exercise in the summer months is essential in maintaining a relationship between hounds and hunstman. All have their own personalities and skills just like humans, and Hunt staff will know each hound by name, as will many hunt followers.

A pack of foxhound's sleep, eat, play, and hunt together. Hunt staff employed by a professional hunt will also take part in the aforementioned with their pack resulting in a unit of hound and human that communicates effectively on a hunting day, primarily through smell and sound when hunting their quarry.

Hounds have to deal with challenges on a hunting day that influence scent, such as weather conditions to ground type, and mostly find conditions are in the favour of the fox. Foxes have acute knowledge of scent and will frequently run through areas when being hunted that they know will foil their drag. This is relevant when flushing a fox from covert as sufficient pressure must be placed on the fox for it to break into the open. Without this pressure a fox may simply run round in circles, or lie tight in thick cover. A misplaced perception is that a pack of hounds is used purely for a pornographic kill when hounds break up a dead fox. This is not the case, one hound will kill a fox comfortably in less time than you have read this sentence, however, getting to the point of a kill, or in modern hunting, a break from covert for a shot to be fired, requires a pack placing steady but consistent pressure.

Legislation over the years has been altered which has introduced mandatory mechanical elements to a hunt, guns; while this has minimised the distance and time of a hunt, it has also pitted the odds against the fox in other respects as their instinct and natural ability to elude a pack of hounds unharmed has been compromised. The use of guns introduced the factor of human error and wounded foxes into a hunting day, which of course must be dealt with swiftly and humanely. A fit full pack of hounds utilizing their individual talents as a team is still essential in a contemporary context to ensure a humane solution towards the respected quarry, should an inconclusive kill be reached by a marksman.

A study led by the vet Dr Jeremy Naylor concluded that the Scottish legislation on hunting was far more humane and efficient than the law in England and Wales, which limits the number of hounds used to two. This was partly due to the fact that the time the fox was hunted with only two hounds was increased by 333%, compared to when a full pack was in use, as in Scotland.

Hunting is a planned organised activity, but due to the fact that it involves a free wild fox in a natural (albeit managed) environment, it remains an unpredictable action. This for followers is part of the lure of observing the craft of fox and hound. It is also due to these circumstances that a pack of hounds is required. Were it a simple process in a sterile environment then of course less hounds could be used, which would cost less money to keep so would be desired. However, foxes are not simple beings, they are very clever and highly adaptive, hence the centuries old bloodlines of foxhound packs that have developed through practitioner's expert knowledge.

*Douglas Bachelor CEO of League Against Cruel Sports
“a pair of dogs are absolutely useless in flushing to guns”*



A hound of the Jedforest Hunt listens to the main pack hunting in a woodland while making a decision on which way to go. A pack of hounds has the ability to flush several foxes out of a covert, but more importantly by communicating to each other by voice, they are then able to follow one fox, resulting in suitable pressure being placed on the quarry to flush it out of covert to a waiting gun. Anything less than a full pack of hounds working cohesively would render the activity as highly ineffective, as stated by Douglas Bachelor CEO of LACS

“a pair of dogs are absolutely useless in flushing to guns”



Mounted followers of the Jedforest Hunt observe hounds working. Some perceive hunting as a fast paced activity with full on action. In fact, it involves a lot of waiting, patience, and appreciation for the hounds at work. Followers have a part to play in that they can act as additional eyes and ears to aid a huntsman at work. Horses are still the preferred mode of transport as they can cover ground efficiently, and just as importantly, are quiet. To hunt a wild animal one must be fully engaged with all available senses, following on horseback permits this. Undoubtedly it also offers a physical and mental challenge when crossing country, but also offers some perspective to what a hound and fox are capable of as athletes, both of which are remarkable.



Riders of the Jedforest Hunt trot pass a wood to wait in a suitable position while a marksman stands at a historical crossing point for foxes. Guns have the challenge of executing a clean shot, within a certain range, whilst doing their best in predicting the course of a hunted fox. This can be done through previous knowledge of fox runs, the direction of the wind, and location of earths. However, the fox is a wild animal equipped with self determination, and often bucks the predicted course of events. Rational, knowledgeable, skilled, and safe guns are required to ensure a humane and appropriate decision is taken in a fluid situation and is beneficial towards fox welfare.

*SSPCA & other
animal rights
groups (LACS
& IFAW)
accepted gun
packs as an
important part
of fox control
(2002)*



A huntsman and gamekeeper discuss options while carrying out fox control. Gamekeepers require effective fox control to protect ground nesting birds. Using a pack of hounds as an aid to flush foxes out of cover is highly efficient, and minimizes the need for alternatives such as snares, lamping by night, or fox drives using man power. Hunting with hounds is a highly visible activity and therefore prone to exposure and criticism, but, other methods such as snaring, which is argued as a less humane option, will carry on away from the public eye. From a fox welfare view the alternatives to hunting with hounds are not preferable and would be escalated out of necessity were professional hunts unable to operate.



Southdean near Chesters, Hawick, in Jedforest Hunt country. A 'well foxed' area due to good habitat and food chain options within hill farmland and both small and extensive forestry blocks. A pack of hounds can fan out in such terrain and cover the ground used by foxes, both in the woodland, and the long grasses and heather on the hill sides. This is done systematically to enable guns to be in the best possible position. The landscape pictured above is fairly typical of the amount of ground a days hunting can cover in regards to flushing out and dispatching foxes, and illustrates the efficiency of a pack of scenting hounds in terms of hectares covered. Ground nesting birds, small mammals, and lambs, all of which populate the above habitat, are impacted directly by a large fox population.



Ewes are scanned for lambs on a hill farm in Jedforest Hunt country. Fox hunts are easily depicted as a symbol of murder, in fact its the total opposite, they are a just cause for maintaining life, both for conservation and economic motives. Technology such as guns, radios, and motorised vehicles (all pictured in this essay) has provided fox hunts with tools to enhance their job in dispatching foxes swiftly and humanely. However were technology to replace the method of hunting one animal with another, then, our connection with nature has become less, and its consequences would potentially be of an intensive indiscriminate practice towards predator control, which, would in fact be more reminiscent of the Victorian era, as opposed to a just and compassionate society that Scotland strives to be in the 21st century.



A ewe gives birth to a lamb on a spring day on Dolphinston Farm near Jedburgh in the Jedforest Hunt country.

Notes