

Submission on the Control of Foxes by Hunting

I am a retired Police Officer from Lothian and Borders Police having spent my entire service in the Hawick, Kelso and Jedburgh area in the Scottish Borders.

In addition to my normal police duties I was also the force coordinator for wildlife crime. I held that role for nearly 20 years and during that time saw the introduction of what is now referred to as the 'Hunting Ban'.

Having been brought up, lived and worked in a rural area, I took a particular interest in all aspects of rural life and country sports such as shooting, fishing and hunting.

As a Police Wildlife Crime Officer I had a good knowledge of the legislation in respect of wildlife and was able to advise people on this legislation and also to enforce it when required.

On retirement from the Police at the end of 2004 I took a more participation role in hunting and wildlife interests. In particular, I followed the Jedforest and Buccleuch foxhounds. For the last 4 years I have been one of the gun followers with the Jedforest Hunt.

With this position and consequently with being more involved with the hunt I have learned a great deal more in the ways the huntsman and his hounds operate. I have also learned about the characteristics and ways of the fox.

Recently I have taken an interest in the effectiveness and efficiency of hunting with a pack of hounds as allowed in Scotland, compared with the hunting with two hounds as allowed in England.

This comparison was tested and trialed in recent years at the Jedforest Hunt and I was involved during these trials.

During these trials it was apparent that a fox was very reluctant to leave a covert. I suspect that this was due to no pressure being applied by the two hounds. More often than not the fox would not flush from the covert. On the other hand, when a pack of hounds was used to flush the fox from the same type of covert, then this was achieved relatively quickly.

As marksmen with guns we would position ourselves where the fox was likely to break cover, often the same places as on previous occasions. Then it would be shot providing it was safe to shoot. I am convinced that this form of fox control is very effective.

Farmers have repeatedly told me of the need to control the fox population, especially during the winter before the spring lambing time. I recognize that shooting and snaring are both

parts of this control. While these forms of control may be effective in certain circumstances, there are also circumstances where hunting with hounds is more effective and also more efficient.

This is one of the reasons that I see why the current method of hunting with a pack of hounds must be allowed to continue. In its current form, it is an effective method of fox control. Having compared hunting with two hounds to hunting with a pack of hounds, it was obvious that the two hound method was totally ineffective.

Malcolm Henderson

