

## **Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 Review**

Dear Lord Bonomy

In my capacity as a huntsman operating under the above Act, I submit that no amendments be made to the current law, which provides an effective and humane method of fox control, where foxes are flushed quickly and effectively by a full pack of hounds to waiting guns.

I am huntsman for the Berwickshire Hunt, which, since the Act was passed, has operated a fox control service to protect livestock, ground nesting birds and game birds for farmers, landowners and gamekeepers in the county of Berwickshire. We work to a protocol that was first drawn up in 2002, and was approved by the Lothian and Borders Police. The protocol has since been reviewed and the latest version has been fully endorsed by Police Scotland.

### **Access to Land**

We operate a free of charge fox control service to farmers, in return for allowing hounds, hunt staff and our mounted followers' access to land. The mounted followers pay a subscription to the hunt, which is used to fund the service. We also provide a fully subsidised fallen stock collection service (removal of dead farm stock) to the farmers. To many farmers, particularly those in remote areas, and in the current economic climate, this is an invaluable service.

In such a terrain as ours, we find that the best mode of transport to offer a reliable fox control service is with the use of horses, and as such we are able to cross a larger area of country. Our mounted followers are invaluable to assist me with hound control, providing me with relevant information and can line roads or areas of livestock which is necessary for public safety, particularly when we are all in the presence of guns. In turn, our mounted followers have access to organised country, which they would not otherwise have permission to cross.

### **Operation**

We use a full pack of foxhounds that have been bred to carry out a fox control service. A full pack of hounds means a fox (or foxes) can be flushed from cover a lot quicker than it would be if we only had one or two hounds. By using an appropriate number of hounds to flush the fox, it can be dispatched by guns more quickly, causing significantly less stress to the fox. In the event that a fox is not cleanly dispatched, a full pack ensures that the fox is located and dealt with immediately. The number of hounds used is decided on a day-to-day basis depending on the terrain and cover of the pre-determined location, and is the most effective and humane method of fox control.

We only use Guns who are experienced shots. Guns mostly travel on ATVs or in off road vehicles. They are placed, at a distance, surrounding the covert, so as to dispatch the fox as it is flushed by the hounds. Guns are generally dressed in camouflage and tend to be hidden in cover, in order not to turn the fox back. More visible clothing would turn the fox back. The number of guns depends on the terrain. Our opponents have suggested that we do not have guns out on operating days, but if we did not, we would be contravening the law, and would not receive permission from the farmer/landowner to access their land. All hunt staff have radio contact with each other in order to carry out a safe and effective operation.

### **Terriermen**

Our terriermen act under a license for the hunt on days we operate. They work to a code of practice as drafted by the National Terrier Federation. Their terrier flushes foxes from earths to a waiting

gun. In the event the fox does not bolt, through injury or sickness, they will locate it and dispatch it humanely. Hounds will generally be in the location in case a bolted and shot fox is not killed outright, to avoid suffering

### **Conclusion**

We operate on set days per week, and offer a call-out service on other days. Our activities are carried out in an open, safe and legal manner. We have a good working relationship with farmers, landowners, gamekeepers, the general public and Police Scotland.

Last year, 200 hours of COVERT surveillance was carried out on mounted packs and shown to Police Scotland. Police Scotland replied stating that there was no evidence to suggest that any Hunt was breaking the law. It was claimed that we had no Guns present, but this is incorrect as we keep a record of all days and which Guns were in operation that day. This record is readily available to show Lord Bonomy's review should he request it.

At a recent RACCE committee meeting Police Scotland confirmed that Scottish Mounted Packs had a good working relationship with the Police and there was no evidence to suggest that any hunts were breaking the law.

As a huntsman of sixteen years, I respect the fox and it's welfare is paramount to my role. I have researched, studied and observed the fox species as broadly as possible, and I sincerely believe the operation I carry out, in the area I carry it out in, under the current law, is the most effective to control a healthy and sustainable fox population. It is my express wish that the current law is not changed, and that animal welfare, not animal rights, is not compromised.

Yours sincerely,

Rory Innes, Master and Huntsman

Berwickshire Hunt

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