

**SOUTH OF ENGLAND SHOW 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2003**  
**NOTES FOR PRESS CONFERENCE**

*“Hunting with Hounds is the natural and most humane method of controlling the population of all four quarry species, fox, deer, hare and mink, in the countryside.”*  
[A Veterinary Opinion: supported by over 500 members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.]

**Natural because the wild animals are hunted in their own environment; they are used to hunting themselves and/or being hunted; they are adapted to it by evolution.**

**Humane because for a major part of any hunt the quarry is under no abnormal stress; the kill (if it occurs) is virtually instantaneous and above all certain; hunting leaves no wounded or damaged survivors; quarry that evade hounds rapidly return to normal behaviour.**

**Hounds perform a vital and unique search and dispatch function for the weak and the sick. [Examples: old age and starvation; disease – sarcoptic mange; gunshot and traffic injuries]**

**Hunting has an unique ability to assess the size and fitness/health of wildlife populations.**

**Foxhounds**

There are 182 packs of hounds registered with the MFHA, each of these packs hunt at least two days per week from autumn to spring – a proportion hunt four days a week.

The number of days for each pack will vary from 60 to 120 days per season.

A two day a week pack is likely to have approximately 60 hunting hounds (30 couple) a four day a week pack may have approximately 50 couple.

Most packs breed their own hounds but will frequently use stallion hounds from other packs. A two-day a week pack will be looking to introduce 10 to 15 young hounds to be entered each year. A four-day a week pack would aim for double this amount.

All these hounds are entered into the Foxhound Kennel Stud book, which was started in 1800.

Bitches are normally ‘put to’ early in the New Year so that the puppies are born in the spring. Puppies will be weaned at 10 to 12 weeks and sent out to ‘walk’ with local farmers and/or hunt supporters. They will remain at walk for as long as possible into the following autumn/winter before returning to the kennels. In the spring they will be integrated into the main pack as they are walked out twice daily.

During their second summer they will be brought to fitness for hunting by daily hound exercise. It is during this process of ‘walking out’ and ‘hound exercise’ that they will learn to respond to the calls of the huntsman.

The young hounds, as they are called, will start hunting in their second autumn aged approximately 18 months.

Hounds hunt by instinct. They learn through experience and most particularly from their elders. The huntsman's role is to guide and correct them so that they only hunt the selected quarry, far more than to teach them how to hunt. **Very few hounds – perhaps 1 in 50 - fail to “enter” (hunt).**

The hunting expectancy of a hound is likely to be 5 to 6 seasons, though there are exceptions. Every fit hound should be expected to hunt 2 days each week – some may benefit from a third day. There will always be a number of hounds that have minor injuries, such as thorns in their pads, knocked up toe nails or wire cuts. After Christmas there will be hounds that are not hunting because they are pregnant.

**After 5 or 6 seasons, when they will be 7 to 8 years old, most hounds physically cannot run up with the rest of the pack. Similarly greyhounds, racehorses and athletes only have a period at their peak. Hounds that cannot keep up will adversely affect the efficiency of the pack and are liable to become a risk hazard. Hounds dislike being left behind. There is no other option other than to humanely put them down when they can no longer perform their role.**

You can explain to a human athlete that there is a life after athletics but you cannot explain to a hound that there is a life after hunting. A hound that has led a kennel life that is centred on hunting does not make a manageable pet.

Working hounds need to have a routine to their lives encompassing feeding, exercising and hunting. They understand and respect a regular routine but will get frustrated and discontented if the routine goes astray.

### **Beagles**

There are 88 packs of hounds registered with the AMHB. They consist of 20 packs of harriers, half of which hunt fox – the remainder hare, and 68 packs of beagles. There are a further 10 packs of basset hounds registered with the MBHA.

Harrier packs are likely to have some 46 (23 couple) and beagles 36 (18 Couple) of hunting hounds. Approximately 6 to 9 young hounds are entered each year.

All these hounds are entered into the Harrier and Beagle Stud book, which has been kept since 1891.

The life cycle and routine for beagles follows the pattern for foxhounds.

### **In general**

The hounds that are threatened include:

- 14,000 foxhounds registered with the MFHA plus others from gun packs and unregistered hunts.
- 500 harriers registered with the AMHB.
- 2700 beagles registered with the AMHB.
- 350 bassets registered with the MBHA.
- 200 deerhounds registered with the MDHA.

- 720 mink hounds registered with the MMHA.
- An unknown number of:
  - Greyhounds
  - Lurchers
  - Salukis
  - Whippets
  - Terriers and
  - Other sporting dogs.

**The working hounds of the United Kingdom are highly valued wherever hunting takes place across the world.**

Brian Fanshawe 27<sup>th</sup> May 2003.