

HUNTING ETIQUETTE

Hunting Etiquette and Hunting Terms, Language and signals

The major concern of people wishing to hunt for the first time seems to be a fear of wearing or doing the wrong thing. Whilst etiquette is important to ensure hunting has an acceptable public image, we hope that people who come to hunt will find us tolerant and helpful. We hope this guide will help you feel more comfortable and confident if you should choose to come out with us for your first experience of hunting. You will not remember all of it, but the more you hunt the more you will realise the reasons for a code of conduct.

What should I wear?

Whilst there is a formal hunting attire that regular followers wear, there are a variety of alternatives which are perfectly acceptable. Starting from the top, any form of safety hat is acceptable, but we would prefer the cover to be of a sober colour and without tassles or pom poms! A hunting shirt and stock, shirt and tie or even a polo neck sweater are acceptable under any safe coat/jacket, but once again brightly coloured coats should be avoided. Wax jackets are perfectly acceptable. Fawn breeches are preferred, but white or coloured breeches/jodhpurs are acceptable if they are all you have. Long boots or jodhpur boots are safest. Spurs are completely optional. Back protectors are also acceptable and are indeed recommended for novice children.

What should I do before coming to a meet mounted?

The first thing to do is telephone one of the Joint Masters – Paul Hancock 01029 820487, Tony Blumenau 01209 831151 or Melroy Francis 01726 890008 and ask if you may join the hunt for the day and check with him the amount (cap) you will be required to pay. You can also find out the best place to park and any other matter you are unsure of. He will want to help you so don't be afraid to ask questions. Also by "booking in" you can be informed of any last minute changes due to weather, farming problems etc.

What should I have in my pockets?

The money for your Cap, a penknife, some baler twine and possibly some food. You may even consider carrying a handkerchief or a bandage for emergencies. If you are a complete stranger, or suffer from any medical condition, it is a good idea to carry a printed copy of your details so that we can help you should you have an accident.

Going to the meet?

It is much more relaxing to allow plenty of time to get to the meet/unboxing place as you are more likely to find a convenient place to unbox. Please do not park in gateways or opposite other boxes or vehicles. Where possible ensure vehicles are completely off the road, especially on narrow roads, and allow room for agricultural vehicles to pass.

What should I do at the meet?

Etiquette demands that you should find the Hunt Secretary and offer him your cap, rather than waiting for him to approach you. Similarly you should say good morning to the Joint Masters (the correct greeting being "*Good morning Master*" even if you know them personally), whilst ensuring that your horse does not get amongst the hounds. In particular find out who is the Field Master for the day and keep behind him/her and obey his/her instructions. If hospitality has been provided at the meet, be sure to thank your host before you leave.

How can I tell who the Hunt Staff are?

The Huntsman wears a red coat as do his whips. The huntsman carries a white whip. The Joint Masters carry full responsibility for the day and have invested considerable time and money in the hope of providing you with an enjoyable day. You should understand that if anything goes wrong or if damage is done, it is the Joint Masters who will have to put matters right. In return you should treat them with some respect and give them priority at gates or jumps.

Is there anything special that my horse should wear?

If you know your horse is liable to kick it should wear a red ribbon at the top of his tail. If it is a young horse and you are not sure of its temperament it should wear a green ribbon, In both cases they should be kept to the back of the field.

Is there anything I need to know about the hounds?

Do not assume that because your horse does not kick your dog at home that he/she will necessarily tolerate a pack of hounds. Even if he/she will, the huntsman does not know that and you will worry him if you get amongst the hounds. Foxhounds are particularly bad at getting out of the way, so it is your duty to keep away from them.

Jumping Etiquette

Do not attempt to jump if there is a hound anywhere near a jump. Give Hunt Staff priority and if you know your horse is a poor jumper let others go first. If your horse refuses, clear the jump quickly and let others go before you try again. If you break a jump make sure it is stock proof before you go on (this is where you might need that baler twine) and ensure you report the breakage to a Master or Hunt Secretary. If you attempt a gate and break it you will be expected to pay for it!

Do I have to jump?

Whilst we try to put in as much jumping as possible a lot will depend on the area being hunted and the ground conditions. There are nearly always easy ways round a jump and a number of people don't jump at all, so there is usually someone to follow. If you are a

stranger and do not want to jump it is best to talk to the Field Master who will know of a regular non jumper to pair you with.

Riding near or through livestock

When riding near or through livestock ensure you are between the stock and the fence and ride at a speed they will tolerate without getting upset. If stock bunch up in a corner, stop and wait for them to move out. You should not enter any field without the Field Master unless instructed to do so.

End of the day

It is important to remember that without a huntsman and his hounds there would be no sport. A thank you goes a long way in helping these people feel appreciated, especially Hunt Staff who will probably be cold, wet and tired at the end of the day. It is traditional to say "Goodnight" at the end of your day.

Did you fall off, get shouted at?

Don't worry, we've all been there. It's all part of becoming an experienced horseman/woman!

General Etiquette

It is surprising how many people leave their manners on the ground when they get on a horse. Please thank cars for slowing down, wave cars on when you see the Masters wave them on, and keep to the nearside if you hear the shout "car please". A smile and "good morning" to people on foot will help to dispel the myth that everyone on horseback is a snob and too good to talk to people on foot.

Have fun, that's what you are there for, and we want you to enjoy yourself and come back again.



Don't wait until the secretary
asks before you pay your 'cap' –

