



HUNTING, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT and the MORAL ISSUE

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Summary

- Mankind has a responsibility to manage the countryside it has created and the wildlife populations that it supports. A balanced wildlife population will not result from a ‘hands off’ approach.(2.1.1)
- The consequences of lack of management threaten vulnerable populations of wildlife, biodiversity, habitat conservation and the production of food. (2.1.3)
- Hunting people are in a unique position to observe changes in wildlife demographics by virtue of their numbers, their widespread distribution and their commitment.(2.2.1)
- Wildlife management differs from pest control because it seeks to maintain healthy and balanced populations of wild mammals at levels which can be sustained by their local environment, and which are acceptable to farmers, landowners and the overall balance of all other indigenous wildlife. On the other hand, pest control aims to reduce or even eradicate populations.(section 2.3)
- Hunting with hounds offers three advantages to the health and fitness of populations: a closed season, dispersal and uniquely a countryside selective, search and dispatch function.(2.4.1)
- Hunting with hounds is natural to the quarry species, allowing it to use its instinctive defence mechanisms. 3.3)
- There are not, and never were, any scientific grounds for banning hunting with hounds on the grounds of cruelty.(4.4)
- There is no wounding, The quarry is either killed or escapes unharmed.(5.1)

- Advances in comparative neuroscience argue convincingly against the anthropomorphic claim that hunted wild animals run in terror of their lives. Rather than being traumatised, as is so often suggested, the animal remains alert at all times, which is crucial to its survival and health in the wild (5.4, 5.5 & 5.6)
- Accusations of hunting being an immoral act are inappropriate and wholly unjustified. (section 6)
- The rules of a civilised society cannot apply in the wild and any attempt to put them there demonstrates a profound ignorance of wildlife (6.3)
- To state that hunting is not morally acceptable in a civilized society is to totally misunderstand wildlife. Wild animals do not live in a civilized society (6.3)
- There are clear differences between animal baiting and hunting (6.7)
- Hunting with hounds does not wound and is selective. In leaving legal other control methods that cannot achieve this, while possibly causing far greater suffering, it is the morality of the Hunting Act itself that should be questioned (6.12)

1 Introduction

Hunting with diverse breeds of dogs has been an integral part of human life since historical records began, whether it was for food, clothing, population control or recreation.

Regrettably the proponents of the Hunting Act 2004 either ignored, or misunderstood, hunting's role in wildlife management. The purpose of this document is to:

- Explain the need for and the role of hunting in wildlife management;
- Distinguish between pest control and wildlife management;
- Examine the morality of hunting activities;
- Show that the Act did not simply ban hunting with dogs, but imposed inconsistent restrictions to the detriment of the management and welfare of the quarry species.

2 Wildlife management

2.1 The need for management

2.1.1 The British countryside has been created by man over centuries to meet human needs and aspirations, such as supplying food, fuel and clothing, for recreation and for aesthetic

benefits. In this man made environment, the welfare of wildlife is best served by management rather than left to its own devices. Further, it should be accepted that mankind has a moral obligation to manage over successful populations where natural wildlife predators, for whatever reason, no longer exist.

2.1.2 A balanced wildlife population will not result from a ‘hands off’ approach. The control of an over-successful species is best achieved by a combination of legal methods undertaken by farmers, gamekeepers, landowners, naturalists and huntsmen, with their divergent interests using the appropriate methods of control for their particular circumstances.

2.1.3 The consequences of lack of management threaten vulnerable populations, biodiversity, habitat conservation and the production of food.

2.1.4 Thus the aim of population management should be to maintain healthy and balanced populations of wild mammals at levels which can be sustained by their local environment, and which are acceptable to farmers, landowners and the overall balance of all other indigenous wildlife. Hunting intrinsically has the motive to achieve this aim.

2.2 Monitoring and accountability

2.2.1 Just as anglers are in a unique position to monitor the health of our waterways, hunting people are in a similar position to observe changes in wildlife demographics, as highlighted, prior to the Hunting Act 2004, by John Webster, Emeritus Professor of Animal Husbandry at Bristol University, *“The hunting communities have the potential to become the most effective contributors to the monitoring, management and conservation of wildlife in England and Wales by virtue of their numbers, their widespread distribution and their commitment.”*

“On the other hand, legislation that simply bans the use of dogs in the killing of foxes, hares and deer, will seriously compromise policies and actions that are already making a significant positive contribution to the quality of the living countryside, and which have the potential to do so much more” (1).

2.2.2 The communal and public aspect of hunting with hounds not only exerts a restraining influence on unacceptable activities related to controlling wildlife but because it is a collective and public activity held on appointed days, hunting lends itself to accountability. Accountability of other methods of culling is impractical and seldom called into question.

2.3 The difference between pest control and wildlife management

2.3.1 Many people and organisations opposed to hunting with dogs appear to have accepted the need for pest control, while condemning what they perceive to be the “sport” of hunting. For example, the former MP, Ann Widdecombe, said in the House of Commons, *“If hunting is not an efficient pesticide, it has no purpose”*(2). Such a view fails to understand the crucial difference between “pest control” and “wildlife management”. The former seeks to

reduce or even eradicate populations, while the latter aims to maintain populations at sustainable levels that are in balance with other wildlife populations and human interests.

2.3.2 When the reason for killing a wild animal is cited as being “pest control”, then frequently welfare issues appear to be ignored, as biologist Dr Nick Fox stated in a report in 2003: *“In pest control, welfare is treated as a secondary priority over efficiency in many cases...it appears, across the board, that ‘pest control’ has been the justification for some of the worst excesses in animal welfare”* (3).

2.4 The health and fitness of populations

2.4.1 All methods of control and management need to be evaluated on their effects on the health and fitness of entire populations. Hunting with hounds offers three advantages to the health and fitness of populations:

- A closed season complementary to the breeding period;
- Selectivity; hunting uniquely reproduces the natural selection process whereby weak and sick animals are culled in direct relation to their debility, thereby promoting the health and vigour of the species;
- Dispersal; it disperses high concentrations of quarry species thus reducing the impact of local damage.

2.4.2 In the case of the fox, it has its place in the overall balance of the UK’s wildlife as an indigenous species. As a “hunted” species it has a status, without which it might be classified merely as a pest and, as such, may face eradication in certain parts of the UK. A zero population of any indigenous species cannot be acceptable.

2.5 Conservation of habitat and contribution to biodiversity

Dr Stephen Tapper, formerly of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (G&WCT), explains biodiversity as an expression of animal and plant abundance which takes account of different species in an ecosystem.

2.5.1 A glance at any Ordnance Survey map for lowland England shows the effect of hunting on the landscape. Many of the depicted woods are named “covert”, especially in the Midlands which has a particularly strong tradition of hunting. These coverts were mostly planted for fox hunting at any time over the last 250 years.

2.5.2 The conservation work undertaken by hunts is predominantly coppicing and creation of sunny glades and paths, and keeping woodlands stock-proof, which is identical to the work done by conservation bodies to promote wildlife and habitat. Keeping woodlands stock-proof is essential to prevent disturbance and trampling by livestock.

2.5.3 Hunts are continuing to plant woods, whenever land and resources are available. Indigenous, broadleaved trees are nearly always the ones used and it is these trees that are the

most valuable for other wildlife. Planting densities are kept low, to provide optimum conditions for thick scrub to develop habitat. Scrub is of high conservation importance for many species, but it has largely disappeared in the farmed landscape, where it is of no economic value to farmers who have no sporting interests.

2.5.4 Research by the Game Conservancy Trust (now the G&WCT) found, *“The area of woodlands managed for foxhunting in England and Wales is 23,300 hectares. This is based on information submitted by 93 hunts and is validated by on-site visits to a random selection of 235 woodlands. This figure is roughly double the area of woodland within the boundaries of National Nature Reserves in England and Wales”* (4).

2.5.5 This research found significantly higher numbers of butterflies and wild flowers in areas previously managed for hunting, compared to unmanaged areas. The data supplied by hunts was also compared against other data with regard to butterflies. The analysis found that rare butterflies occur more frequently in grid squares containing woodland managed for hunting.

2.5.6 In 2003, the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) reported, *“Nevertheless, landowners who hunt with hounds are more likely to conserve woodland habitat and plant more woodland and hedgerows”*, suggesting that the perceived recreation and social benefits do produce conservation benefits (5).

3 Hunting with hounds

References to hunting with dogs apply either to hunting before the passing of the Hunting Act or to activities that currently remain legal.

3.1 A misunderstanding of the Hunting Act is the fact that it is the dog that hunts, not the human. This applies to all dogs of all types - potentially they all “hunt” in the sense that is encompassed by the Hunting Act. But not all hunting with hounds has been prohibited by law. Certain activities of hunting remain legal, for example using two hounds to flush a wild animal out of cover to be shot and the use of terriers, under particular conditions, to flush out a fox from an underground refuge. However, no evidence has ever been provided to justify in animal welfare terms why such exemptions should apply. These illogical conditions not only severely restrict the use of hounds, but also cause adverse welfare consequences to the quarry species because firstly hounds are prevented from performing their natural search and dispatch function and secondly there is an increased dependence on firearms and trapping.

3.2 Although all dogs may hunt individually the method by which a pack of hounds hunts has much in common with the method employed by a pack of wolves. Hunting with hounds can therefore be regarded as ‘a natural phenomenon’ and this selective ‘animal to animal’ interaction in wildlife management uniquely distinguishes hunting with hounds from all other methods of wildlife population control, as highlighted by veterinary surgeon Katie Colvile in her review *The Natural Chase* (6).

3.3 Professor Roger Scruton has pointed out that, *“Hunting with hounds is entirely natural to the four quarry species since it does not use any alien human technology for which the hunted animal has no natural defence”* (7).

3.4 Hunting with hounds is much more than simple tracking and pursuit. Firstly the scenting power of the hound enables it to locate and track the quarry. Secondly the hunting will reproduce the natural selection process as portrayed in 2.4.1 above.

3.5 **The Chase.** In the case of fox hunting, the fox is hunted in territory with which it is familiar. It will know where to go to give itself the best chance of escape. For most of the duration of the hunt, the fox will be hunted by scent and be out of sight of the hounds and even unaware it is the target quarry. For this time the fox will be moving at its own pace confident of its ability to escape. Foxes that are hunted, rather than merely disturbed, escape far more often than not - in the region of 1 in 6 is killed, but this will have regional and seasonal variations. If a fox has been hunted before, it will have the expectation of escaping again. Moreover, it is questionable how far foxes can distinguish the initial stages of a hunt from the repeated disturbances with which they are regularly faced, unrelated to hunting.

3.6 Prof. David Macdonald and others suggest the average duration of a fox hunt to be about 30 minutes (8). A survey undertaken by the Masters of Foxhounds Association in January and February 1997, involved 12 hunts, 115 hunting days, 421 fox finds with an average length of chase of 29 minutes. 61 foxes were caught "above ground" with the longest single hunt to a kill being 75 minutes. Two other points are relevant; 30% of the kills were achieved within 5 minutes of the find and the longer hunts may well have involved a succession of foxes (9).

3.7 **The Kill.** The fox-hound has a powerful jaw capable of killing on impact. If and when a fox is caught, it is killed almost instantaneously through destruction of the neck and thorax, made possible by the considerable power weight ratio the hound has over the fox. There is no chance of the fox being wounded and escaping. The actual cause of death is largely academic; what is important is how quick and how certain. The subsequent dismemberment of the carcass, if it occurs, may not be a pretty sight, but it is of no consequence to the dead animal. In the case of deer, death comes from a close range shot to the head by a trained marksman when the hounds have brought the deer to bay. Hounds do not attack the quarry.

3.8 Though the swift and certain kill by hounds may be unpleasant in the eyes of some people, it should be appreciated that death in the wild, in the absence of natural predators and without hunting, involves protracted pain, sepsis, gangrene, starvation, hypothermia for days or even weeks before death supervenes.

3.9 In the absence of psychological stress (see paragraphs 5.4, 5.5 & 5.6 below) the physiological stress involved in the terminal stages of a hunt is no more than the reversible physiological stress endured by the human athlete or racehorse. This compares more favourably with the protracted stress associated with snaring and trapping or the pain and suffering associated with wounding by shooting.

3.10 Hunting with hounds is organised in a controlled fashion over areas of adjoining properties. The majority of landowners and farmers within hunt areas are largely content to leave fox management to the hunt, at least in the first instance. The Game Conservancy Trust (now the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust) in their report "*Fox Control in the Countryside 2000*" concluded that hunting was the method of control most favoured by farmers in two of their three research areas. In the third area hunting ranked second below the

rifle, but in this area shooters and gamekeepers predominate and there is a low density of foxes (10).

3.11 The report found that on average *“permission to hunt is sought but denied on only 2% of allotted country”* - put another way 98% is available. A survey of Hunts in England and Wales reported that of land available for hunting only 1% was not hunted by foxhounds because permission is denied (11).

3.12 The report also states, *“Several discretionary aspects of present-day foxhunting influence the number of foxes killed. The amount of land any pack attempts to hunt, the number of meets per season, the distribution of meets in relation to fox abundance, and the length of the hunting season all determine culling intensity – as do the decision as whether to dig out foxes that have gone to ground, and the proportion of the season run under early season rules. For many hunts, current choices on these aspects can only be interpreted as a policy of moderation, implying that the impact of hunting could be increased if desired.”*

3.13 The utilitarian value of recreation should not be ignored. The majority who ride or follow hunts, even under the present restrictions, do so because they enjoy it for many reasons unrelated to the control and management aspects of hunting; for the challenge, indeed adventure, of following hounds across country in an unpredictable manner; for the fascination of seeing hounds at work; for a unique chance to experience and come to understand the countryside at large, whether on foot or on horse. It is because of their enjoyment that they are prepared to either pay or work for the utilitarian benefits of hunting.

3.14 The sporting or recreational element of hunting is irrelevant to the central issue of welfare except in so much as it happens to be what pays for this particular method of humane control. It is totally immaterial to the hunted animal whether opponents or proponents of hunting regard it as a sport. Hunting must be judged solely on what is best for the welfare of the quarry species, not by misguided anthropomorphism or moral prejudices.

4 Efficiency and humaneness

4.1 All civilised societies accept that man should not cause unnecessary suffering to animals. However, no society has ever organised itself on the basis that any activity which exploits animals must be outlawed. If it did, transportation and the slaughtering of animals for meat, exploitation of horses and greyhounds for racing and even guide dogs for the blind would be banned.

4.2 An accusation often made against hunting with dogs is that it is “inefficient”, implying that efficiency somehow relates to the more humane treatment of the quarry species. The effectiveness of control should be judged on maintaining sustainable and healthy populations with the minimum of suffering and not merely on the numbers killed.

4.3 There is no direct link between efficiency and humaneness. Indeed, “efficient” methods of culling can often cause extreme levels of suffering and cannot be selective in the same way that hounds are when hunting.

4.4 There are not and never were any scientific grounds for banning hunting with hounds on the grounds of cruelty. Lord Burns, Chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales said, “*Naturally, people ask whether we were implying that hunting is cruel but in true Sir Humphrey style we were not prepared to say so clearly. The short answer to that question is no. There was not sufficient verifiable evidence or data safely to reach views about cruelty*” (12). A view echoed by inquiry committee member and veterinary surgeon Lord Soulsby, “*At no point did the committee conclude, or even attempt to conclude, an assessment of cruelty. Yet many bodies have erroneously - I repeat the word “erroneously” - quoted the Burns report, stating that it clearly demonstrated that the practice of hunting wild animals with dogs caused cruelty. The report did not state that*” (13).

4.5 A Veterinary Opinion on Hunting with Hounds, supported by over 560 members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons states, “*Hunting with hounds is the natural and most humane method of managing and controlling foxes, hares, deer and mink in the countryside*” (14). This opinion is reached after careful consideration of all the various methods of control and their implications for the wild animal.

5 Wounding and fear

5.1 A major animal welfare benefit of using scenting hounds is that that the quarry species is either killed or escapes unharmed – hunting does not leave any wounded survivors.

5.2 Various arguments against hunting have claimed that “humane shooting” is always preferable to hunting. A direct hit will cause near instantaneous death, but shooting is intrinsically fallible, even if undertaken properly. Inexpert or opportunistic shots may cause protracted suffering by wounding. No amount of training can totally eliminate mistakes by the beginner, the reckless, the downright unlucky or even the expert.

5.3 Despite there being virtually no scientific research into wounding rates in shot foxes during the passage of the Hunting Bill, claims were made by the main anti-hunting groups and accepted by Government that shooting was always preferable to hunting with dogs and that wounding rates were very low. This view was proven to be untenable by research published in 2003, which showed much higher wounding rates in a number of legal shooting regimes and exposed severe technical flaws in previous claims that had shown low wounding rates. Subsequently, the research was peer-reviewed and published in 2005 by the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare in its journal *Animal Welfare* (15). Yet the use of non-peer reviewed information continues to be cited by anti hunting groups.

5.4 Dogs evolved from wolves and their hunting abilities and strategies are similar. It is also the case that the quarry species have developed various tactics to avoid being caught by hunting packs of wolves or dogs. Rather than being traumatised as is so often suggested, they remain alert at all times which is crucial to their survival and, consequently their health, in the wild. Comparative neuroscience has recently gone a long way towards demonstrating that wild animals, apart from possibly the primates and cetaceans, almost certainly lack the complex brain and mental abilities necessary to perceive the human concepts of fear and

death. Therefore to advocate a precautionary principle in respect of hunting simply because one cannot tell how a quarry animal feels is to deny or be ignorant of this substantial body of scientific evidence.

5.5 The neuroscientist Professor Susan Greenfield says, *“Anxiety is a state of mind that is initiated and perpetuated with very little external assistance. Anxiety, one might think, is far closer to fear than is pleasure, but in brain terms, it could be the exact opposite. After all, pure fear, as pleasure, is very much in the here and now. Anxiety, on the other hand...depends on the ability to forsake the present moment and anticipate an uncomfortable future. It is hard to imagine that the rabbit in his burrow dwells on past times when it manages to escape a fox and is now worrying about whether a fox is going to pass that way once more”* (16).

5.6 The following quote from Professor John Webster in his book *Animal Welfare - a Cool Eye towards Eden* is relevant, *“Fear is one of the most useful properties of the conscious mind because it is conducive to survival. Sentient animals are born curious because they need education to survive and acquire this education usually while under the protection of a parent or parents. They learn to discriminate between real and apparent dangers and, as they mature, become progressively cautious. Having lost the protection of a parent, they rely on their own sense of fear to direct their actions towards survival. When the gazelle learns that the charge of the leopard is truly frightening but once again, manages to escape, it may come to recognize fear as a constructive motivating force that produces its own reward, not as a source of suffering”* (17).

6 Morality and sport

6.1 Ever since people have debated the hunting issue, there has been one point of contention that is outside the scientific field - that of the morality of hunting or, as it is more usually described, “killing for fun or sport”. Some hold extreme views on hunting; The Rev. Professor Andrew Linzey said in a pamphlet published by the Christian Socialist Movement, *“Causing suffering for sport is intrinsically evil. Hunting, therefore, belongs to that class of always morally impermissible acts along with rape, child abuse and torture”* (18).

6.2 A more liberal view was expressed by the Lord Bishops in the various debates in Parliament on hunting. The Bishop of Peterborough summarised these opinions when he said, *“In a liberal democracy it is surely right that where there is such genuine disagreement about an issue - perhaps, particularly, an issue about the morality of which we are divided - we should continue to give people the freedom to make up their own minds and legislate only if we are clear that the health of our society is threatened”* (19).

6.3 To state that hunting is not morally acceptable in a civilised society is to totally misunderstand wildlife. Wild animals do not live in a civilised society and those people who would put them there do them no favour whatsoever. It demonstrates a profound ignorance of

the true role of hunting in wildlife management and animal welfare. Control of wildlife populations cannot be based on such a false premise.

6.4 Clearly, animals are not moral beings, as they have no true sense of what is right and wrong, in the way that humans do. Therefore, when a dog hunts and does so naturally, this cannot be an immoral act. The human motive, as far as the quarry animal is concerned, is totally irrelevant; it simply experiences what is being done to it.

6.5 So, in the moral debate, the focus shifts from the act to the attitude of the person in control of the dog. As stated paragraph 3.2, hunting with dogs can be regarded as “natural” for both hound and quarry and, crucially, does not involve the possibility of wounding. To deprive wildlife of the natural and most humane method of control must therefore itself be morally reprehensible.

6.6 It is important to understand exactly what constitutes “hunting with dogs” and the roles played by the participants. Hunting is not simply ‘pest control’, nor is it simply ‘sport’. It might accurately be described as a combination of ‘sport/wildlife management/pest control’ in that it is sport for most of the riders and followers (who fund the operation) and wildlife management and pest control, as undertaken by the hunt staff and terrier men (who operate only when the land owner requests the removal of a fox). People will join, follow and support hunting for numerous reasons, as prescribed in paragraph 3.13. It is hard, if not impossible, to imagine the vast majority of such individuals being corrupted or depraved by the activity. There is clearly an enormous difference between those who follow the hunts and those who take pleasure in seeing one animal fight another, as in dog fighting or badger baiting.

6.7 The difference between baiting and hunting has been clarified by Dr Lewis Thomas, *“Cock fighting, bull baiting and dog fighting, which were gratuitous acts of cruelty on a captive animal, totally deprived of its natural avoidance strategies and for no other purpose than betting, competition, and spectacle, a century or two ago, have rightly been abolished. In no sense can the hunting of a free-living wild animal, with all its natural avoidance strategies in place, be equated with these practices”* (20).

6.8 It is worth noting that one of the foremost campaigners against the baiting of animals was a foxhunter. Richard Martin was the MP for Galway in the 19th century and a supporter and friend of the anti-slavery MP William Wilberforce. Martin championed the first animal welfare law in Britain - indeed the first anywhere in the world - which soon after led to the banning of the baiting ‘sports’. He was also instrumental, along with Wilberforce, in the formation of the RSPCA. Yet Martin saw no contradiction in participating in hunting with hounds.

6.9 Hunting with hounds was much reduced during World War 2, with the result that shooting increased and with it an inevitable increase in wounding. In the late 1940s, the abolition of hunting was on the newly-elected Labour government’s agenda, but there was considerable concern over the numbers of wounded foxes. The government set up the Committee on Cruelty to Wild Animals (known as the Scott Henderson Committee) and its conclusions to retain hunting with dogs were accepted by the RSPCA because of the suffering caused by alternative methods of control (21). The welfare benefits of hunting are

as true today as when the RSPCA endorsed them in their submission to the Scott Henderson Inquiry in 1951. Nothing has changed since except the politics of the RSPCA.

6.10 The folly of the hunting ban has been condemned by a former Chairman of the RSPCA, John Hobhouse, who said, *“The Hunting Act is severely flawed and unworkable... For an Act of Parliament purporting to relieve animal suffering to do the exact opposite is very sad. That the RSPCA, which does immensely important work on so many animal welfare fronts, has been party to this fiasco is a tragedy”* (22).

6.11 Accusations of cruelty to animals leading to cruelty to humans have been drawn from particular cases of individuals who may have tortured animals earlier in their lives and gone on to perform acts of violence against human victims. Extrapolation to hunting of research that relates domestic violence with animal abuse is wholly inappropriate and a totally spurious allegation. Hunt followers can enjoy a day’s hunting equally whether or not a kill is made.

6.12 In banning an activity that does not wound and is selective, whilst leaving legal other control methods that can wound and cause far greater suffering, those politicians and welfare groups who supported the Hunting Act showed that their desire for a ban on hunting was their primary objective rather than the improvement of animal welfare. It is therefore the morality of the Hunting Act itself that should be questioned.

7 Conclusions

7.1 The present document attempts to address and correct the considerable ignorance that hitherto existed about the use of hounds in wildlife management and the confusion as to what management itself means. The difference between the states in which wild and domestic animals live is also poorly understood and has been addressed in *Life in the Wild* (VAWM 2011).

7.2 The aim of wildlife management is crucially different from pest control. In the latter, it is elimination of the target species that is the motive, frequently using unnatural methods that can cause high degrees of suffering. Management has the aim of seeking to reach acceptable and sustainable levels of wildlife populations. Hunting with hounds, and those many unpaid “eyes and ears” of its supporters, are a valuable and natural component of this management process.

7.3 On the moral issue, it is the welfare of the wild animal that must be paramount. The charge of cruelty is the only legitimate charge to be answered and since hunting is demonstrably the natural and most humane method of control, the motives and morality of those that go hunting is no business of others in a democratic society and certainly not a matter for Parliament. Put another way - can it be credible that the tens of thousands of law abiding people from all walks of life that support hunting could be so morally corrupt as to require censure by law? Only the supremely arrogant could answer yes to such a question.

7.4 The Hunting Act 2004 has been widely criticised by the media, the judiciary, veterinarians, politicians, senior civil servants and the Prime Minister at the time of its

passing and has totally failed to improve the welfare of the hunted species. The Act creates technical, rather than welfare-based offences. In part this was because the hunting debate attracted some people who saw it as a useful vehicle for their prejudices and partly because of a misunderstanding of issues raised here. A re-assessment of hunting with hounds and its place in wildlife management should be made. It is contended that the information and discussion above allows the activity to be seen in a different light, even by those people who would never claim to be supporters of hunting.

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Other publications by the Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management

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- The use, misuse and abuse of science in support of the Hunting Act 2004 (2007)
- The Natural Chase by Katie Colvile (2008)
- Answers to misconceptions about hunting (2010)
- Life in the Wild (2011)

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