

The Master of the Hunt

I have spent almost all my life hunting. It is more than fifty years since I first joined in a hunt on my pony and nearly fell off when it jumped the hedges. I was 'in at the kill', if you know what that means. The old Master of the Hunt cut the tail off the fox and smeared blood on my face. He said it was an honour. I didn't realise then just how splendid our English hunting traditions were. I'm told they probably go back a thousand years! It is a wonderful sight to see the riders chasing across the fields on a frosty morning

following the hounds. And in the far distance is the fox that the farmer wants killed. Our local farmer is a very keen huntsman but there are some pathetic protestors who try to stop us. They turn up every time shouting at the horses and dogs, and even try to hurt the hounds! Can you imagine that? I am determined that that the hunt will go on for my children and grandchildren.



What is your name?

How old are you?

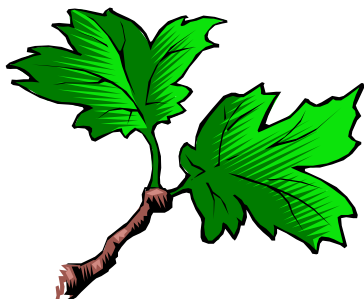
What do you think of foxes?

Should people be allowed to protest against hunting?

The Naturalist

The fox is now our largest predator. There used to be wolves in this country three hundred years ago, who attacked foxes. In the times of the Romans there were also lynxes which look like large cats with pointed ears. I believe in balanced ecosystems where predators and prey are in balance. If there were more foxes they would keep the rabbits under control. If they killed too many rabbits the foxes themselves would starve. That is ecology. Foxes and cubs are a very beautiful sight, I often see the little ones playing and rolling over which is really learning hunting

skills, when I walk across the fields on the edge of a wood. I have a 'hide' there and take film of them. People complain that foxes bite the heads off chickens even when they have already had enough to eat. That is not cruel, just the way foxes are. When the foxes live in urban areas they become nocturnal, raiding dustbins for food, and spreading infection. The city is not their natural habitat. As for hares, which are getting rare and are an "Action Plan Species", almost an endangered species, they should never be hunted.



What is your name?

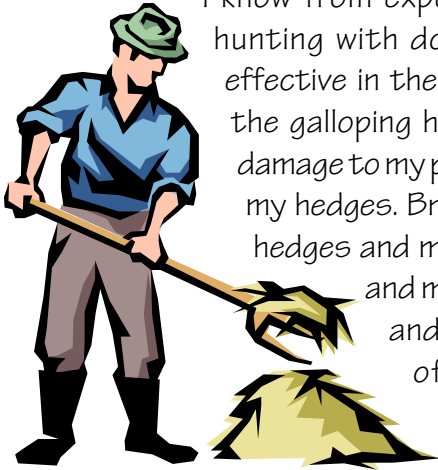
What was your favourite subject at school?

Are you for or against hunting foxes with dogs?

What do you think about mink-hunting?

The Farmer

I make my living farming sheep in the Welsh hills. It is hard work even without Foot-and-Mouth disease. There are two things about this fox problem that I am sure about. One is that, given a chance, foxes attack and kill my new-born lambs. Some so-called scientists, still seem to be doubtful about that, but they should live here on the hills and see for themselves. The other thing



I know from experience is that hunting with dogs is not very effective in the mountains and the galloping horses do great damage to my pasture land and my hedges. Break down those hedges and my sheep escape and may be killed. So I and my neighbours often go on a simple shoot.

We take our dogs with us but not horses. The dogs flush out the foxes, even when they are in their 'earths' (burrows) and we shoot them. We go 'cubbing' in the late summer. Foxes have four or five cubs every year and sheep farming would become impossible if they all survived. So we dig out the ones we can find, and kill them.

What is your name?

Why did you choose to be a sheep farmer?

Do you feel sorry for the hunted fox?

What do you feel about people walking across your land and not closing the gates?

The Local Member of Parliament

The question of which way to vote on the "Hunting with dogs" bill has been left to us MPs to decide for ourselves. In most cases the 'Whips', special MPs in each of the three main parties, check up on us and make sure that we vote the way our party wants. But this is different – it is a free vote. I don't know much about hunting as I was brought up in London, but I am MP for an agricultural constituency in south east England, so I decided to find out what the local people thought. I also read as much as I could about the matter. It seems that there are between 6,000 and 8,000 full time jobs which depend directly on hunting in England. I think there are about 400 in my constituency which has two big local hunts. More than that, the local pubs and hotels make money, directly or indirectly, out of hunting. There would also be fewer horses and stables, which would effect

some other people.

The farmers also told me that if the bill were passed it would be as if they had lost a free 'pest-control' service.

Fox numbers have to be kept down, one way or another.



What is your name?

How did you come to be MP for an agricultural constituency?

What are you most concerned about – people's jobs or cruelty to foxes?

Did you join in any of the demonstrations for or against hunting with dogs?

The RSPCA Representative

I am deeply concerned about any kind of cruelty to animals, and am continually amazed and horrified by what people will do. I realise that we have too many foxes in the countryside and their numbers do need 'managing'. There are about 200 registered packs of hounds in England and Wales which kill 21,000 to 25,000 foxes a year. Our job is to make sure the killing is done as humanely as possible. The 'cubbing' of foxes where the young cubs are dug out and killed by terriers is certainly not humane. The

master of the hunt always tells me that the hunted fox is killed instantly by single bite to the neck by the leading hound. I doubt this. In most cases I have seen there are massive injuries to the fox, but anyway it does die in a matter of seconds. The worst way of killing them is not by hunting but by snares. These are traps in which the fox's leg is caught and the animal may take hours or days to die in great pain, or may even bite off its own leg in order to escape.

What is your name?

Why did you join the RSPCA ?

What qualifications do you have?

Are you for or against the ban on hunting with hounds?



The Deer Hunter

I live on the borders of Devon and Somerset. We have about 5000 red deer in the region and there are only three registered packs of stag hounds in the whole area. Luckily one is near me and I think that the sight of red deer bounding across the countryside with all the hounds baying as they pursue them, is quite splendid. Their numbers have to be reduced one way or another. They are hard to contain because the deer can easily jump over a five foot fence or force a path through any hedge. They eat the crops in the field and can cause serious

accidents on the road when they collide with cars. One leapt over a hedge, hit my car so that I had to pay out £500, the deer was not hurt at all! Our hunts only account for only 15% of the deer 'culled' each year, but they give us delicious chunks of venison for Sunday lunch. Some scientists say that being chased by hounds gives the deer serious stress, but how could they possibly know, and does it matter?

What is your name?

Have you always lived in the country?

How much does it cost to belong to the local deer hunt?

Why do you think it is worth it?



The Friend of the Earth

We believe that it is essential to consider the whole countryside and try to maintain it in a sustainable condition. Most of us are vegetarians and the very idea of going out with the deer hounds to kill a Sunday lunch is quite horrible! We are all in favour of a complete ban on hunting with hounds. My husband and I live in the country and often go out to see foxes near their earths in the early morning. We have even been up to London to demonstrate with the Countryside Alliance against hunting in Trafalgar Square. But half of them were

hunters! One of the problems in our area is the number of pheasants in the woods. They are deliberately raised in large numbers by gamekeepers working for rich landowners. Just as soon as the "glorious 10th of August" comes round the same people that paid to have them raised, now shoot the pheasants, and eat them. Meanwhile many of the young pheasants have gone to feed the increasing fox population. So the increase in their numbers is due to human greed.



What is your name?

How old are you?

Why are you a vegetarian?

What is your attitude towards conservation on our planet?

The Young Horse Rider

Me and my friends are really keen on riding. You people who live in towns, 'townees' we call you, do not understand our lives. You can go to discos whenever you want. You have shopping centres too. We don't, but some of us have ponies or horses of our own. We may use them for hunting, or not, but everything we want to

do might well stop completely if hunting were banned. The riding stables keep special 'hunters' to hire out to people who want to follow the hunt; these are horses which can jump over the hedges and ditches.



The hunts take place most often in the winter when there is little else to do. Without hunting the stables would go bust, and there would be no help for our ponies. In the summer we have fairs and gymkhanas, that is ponies and horses again, and also 'Point to Points' which are dangerous and thrilling. At Christmas there is the famous Hunt Ball, good music and booze, and discos also arranged by the hunt from time to time. It would be awful if hunting were stopped, and worst for those who live in really isolated villages. "Hands off our hunts!"

What is your name?

Do you go hunting?

Is keeping a pony expensive?

What do you think about foxes?