

THE HUNTING OFFICE

The Executive arm of the Governing Bodies for Hunting with Hounds in the UK

Setting Standards and the Governance of Hunting with Hounds

“Nothing less than Excellent is Acceptable”

This paper has been prepared in discussions with the Executive Committee by the three new Directors of the Hunting Office, Alice Bowden, Mark Hankinson and Richard Tyacke, as they officially take up their roles within the Hunting Office. It has been formulated after conversations by the MFHA about the delivery and implementation of standards within hunts and hunting.

This note is informed by previous work done on Viabilities of Hunts as well as recent conclusions from the HAG report. Having considered these, as well as other previous work, we aim to set out the current standards and expectations for all organisations involved with the activity of hunting with hounds, and all those we serve, advise and help.

The Hunting Office is the executive and administrative arm of the Governing Bodies for hunting with hounds in the UK. Established in 2005, it is the central organisation which is delegated to run the administrative, advisory and supervisory functions of the Hunting Associations, which are the governing bodies for their respective disciplines. The Hunting Office supports and supervises all registered hunts, their officials and their staff, co-ordinates the governance of hunts and hunting activities, and reports back to the Governing Bodies.

All the documents referred to below can be found in the [Members Section of the Hunting Office Website](#). All Hunt Officials have access to this section, and should have a login and password – should you need a new login or password, please contact the Hunting Office.

Hunt Viability and Sustainability

The Hunting Office works to assist, support and advise all hunts on best practice as well as encouraging focus on hunt viability and sustainability. Hunt officials and committees should pay particular consideration to the following five areas. These key areas will form the basis of how we approach a sustainable future for hunts across the UK.

1. **Finance.** There should be sufficient funds to run a proper establishment including the employment of full and part-time staff and use of volunteers.
2. **Leadership.** There should be a suitable Chairman, Masters and Hunt Officials to undertake the correct management of the hunt.
3. **Kennels and Staff.** Hounds should be kennelled in a safe secure and suitable environment, and be looked after by competent and capable staff. There should be enough staff in place (professional, amateur or volunteer) to cover potential staff illness or time off.
4. **Huntability Country.** There should be enough country to enable packs to go out at least twice per week. This may vary with foot packs.
5. **Ability to Hunt within the Law.** Hunts must have sufficient means to make sure they are hunting within the law.

Governance Frameworks

The Hunting Office manages and implements the Governance Frameworks under the authority of the Hunting Associations. These are made up of a number of accepted policies and documents which are already in place and give details of how hunts and hunting should be conducted.

The Association Rules have recently been reviewed and they provide the core of the Governance Frameworks applicable to hunting. In addition, the Hunting Office continually produces a number of updated briefing notes and instructions on various matters which hunts should follow; these are circulated to all packs when they are produced or updated and can also be found on the Hunting Office website. The Hunting Office also carries out an ongoing cycle of Hunt and Kennel Visits and follow ups for assessment, regulation and compliance purposes.

By applying these Governance Frameworks, the Hunting Office implements a regime of self-regulation on behalf of each Association. These operate to define and promote best practice and standards in the field and in kennels, and are intended to provide a mechanism through which to hold Association member hunts to account.

Hunting within the Law

All Hunt Staff and Hunt Officials should be familiar with the [Hunting Act 2004](#) legislation and make sure that there are sufficient means in place to carry out legal hunting activities. Evidence of hunting within the law on a daily basis should be recorded and kept, in case spurious allegations are made against the hunt about illegal activities. Hunts should have evidence of their legal hunting activities in order for the Legal Fees Insurance cover to be in place.

Standards in Hunt Management

All registered hunts should follow the Constitution, Rules and Recommendations for their Hunting Association ([MFHA Constitution, Rules and Recommendations](#)) ([AMHB Rules](#)) which set out the relevant regulations to which all hunts should adhere. It is expected that all Masters and Hunt Officials are familiar with the Association Rules and make sure that their Hunt, and the management of it, complies with them at all times.

Masters and Hunt Officials are expected to follow the [Competencies Required within a Mastership](#) which gives essential guidance regarding Hunt Management.

The Hunting Office will regularly update the [Employment Contracts, Templates and Documentation](#) for hunts to utilise for their Hunt Staff. Employment Law should always be complied with and guidance can be given on employment matters by both the Hunting Office, as well as the [rradar Legal Helpline \(0800 9556111\)](#) which is a valuable resource for hunts to use.

The Hunting Office has also compiled up to date [Health and Safety Guidance and Templates](#) for hunts to utilise. Health and Safety is a crucial part of the workplace and all hunts should adhere to Health and Safety legislation and guidelines.

Standards in Kennels

It is expected that all hunt kennels, and the staff working within them, comply with the [Code of Practice for the Welfare of Hounds in Hunt Kennels](#). This is a fundamental and essential piece of guidance and gives Masters and Hunt Staff the necessary standards for Hound Husbandry and preventative veterinary matters. The Code follows the approach adopted by the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and covers topics such as Kennel Accommodation; Breeding; Hound Health; Feeding; and the Law.

All kennels or premises that are DEFRA Approved Animal By Products (ABP) Collection Centres or ABP Final Users should adhere to all DEFRA regulations and guidelines. Premises are inspected by

APHA (Government) Vets for compliance twice a year and it is crucial that hunts comply with all regulations in order to retain their approval status. All the DEFRA regulations for ABP can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/animal-by-product-categories-site-approval-hygiene-and-disposal> and the Hunting Office has prepared a summary briefing note for all hunts on the main regulations affecting Hunt Kennels – [Deadstock Handling and Animal By Products](#).

Kennel Visits

The Hunting Office carries out regular Hunt and Kennel visits to assess compliance and standards within kennels. These are a good opportunity to make sure the kennels and kennels team understand and maintain the highest standards, and to get assistance from the Hunting Office Team on queries, difficulties or areas of that needs to be addressed.

The recommendations made to hunts after such visits are there as guidance on what needs to be implemented or amended.

The Hunting Office can help identify issues that need to be addressed and offer guidance on the correct direction and implementation of changes.

The [Kennel Visit Forms](#) are used as guidance for the Kennel visit and are a valuable aid to Hunts - they cover all areas of Hunt Management and elements that should be in place.

Standards on a Hunting Day

The Hunting Office has produced a [Hunting Code of Conduct Example](#) which should be adopted by hunts and used to implement standards on a hunting day. This Code of Conduct aims to make sure that all members of the hunt following on a day's hunting behave with courtesy, respect and good manners towards each other, hunt officials as well as members of the public.

The guidance applies all those following on horses, ponies, in cars, bicycles, quad bikes and on foot. Members should therefore agree collectively, and individually, to follow a simple common-sense code of conduct with self-regulation from their own membership, enforced if necessary, by the Masters and Hunt Committee.

Training

The Hunting Office runs a programme of [Training Courses for Hunts, Hunts Staff and other Hunt Personnel](#) to maintain the highest professional standards in animal care, welfare and management which all Hunt Staff should be encouraged to attend. The Hunting Office is a UK Rural Skills Approved Training Provider and runs a variety of courses and seminars focussing on Hound Husbandry, Hound Welfare and Hunt Management. The Training Programme is an essential part of Hunt Staff Continuing Professional Development allowing hunt staff to work with knowledge and confidence.

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