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Hunt Etiquette

Waitemata Hunt Inc

Drag Hunting Information

Following is an Etiquette guide for hunting with Waitemata Hunt Inc, this guide serves as a useful tool for beginner & novice hunters, please feel free to contact us should you have any questions relating to Hunt Etiquette or about Waitemata Hunt Inc.

Dress

Dress in the hunting field is largely traditional and essentially practical. Much of the pageantry and colour of the chase that thrills so many is due to the dress that is worn. That pageantry still persists today is due to the fact that the followers of a hunt are jealous of their correct appearance.

Each hunt has the right to decide on its own hunt colour, which is worn on the collar of a black or dark grey hunting coat. Only hunt officials should wear full hunt livery, which consists of a velvet cap, hunting coat (five buttons for a master), white or cream breeches and black top-boots with mahogany or lighter tops.

Correct Dress for Members

Coats: Black or dark grey coats with colour on the collar, and one vent in the back.

Breeches: Preferably beige or fawn in colour and not white or cream as these colours are for hunt officials only. Buttons are preferable to laces.

Boots: Black top-boots with straps (garters) the same colour as boots. The legs of these should be of stiffened leather and must reach high up under the knee.

Hats: Black bowler hats or hunting caps are worn in the field. The ribbons of the latter must hang down. Bowler hats are considered more serviceable as they prevent the rain from running down the neck.

Stocks: Stocks should be starched and white in colour when worn with a black or grey hunting coat. They must be tied neatly with the correct hunting knot. The ends should be sewn to prevent flapping. A small plain stock pin is placed just below the knot.

Gloves: Gloves should be yellow or buff in colour and of material that does not slip when wet. Woolen or string gloves are recommended.

Hunting Whip: The hunting whip should comprise whip, thong & lash. It should not be carried in complete and is held about half way up, handle down-wards, with thong held close against the stock, and not in coils around the hand. It may be used to warn hounds from around horse's heels, and to open or shut gates, or be used by the member if called upon to assist the huntsman.



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| Spurs: | Spurs should be worn around the ankle and not the heel. Care should be taken to fit these correctly and to ensure that they do not hang down. |
| Waistcoats: | Waistcoats, preferably of the Hunt colour may be worn. |
| Junior Members: | Junior members are correct in wearing tweed hacking jacket, jodhpurs, Jodhpur boots, collar and tie. (For Childrens Hunts eventing attire is acceptable. i.e black jacket, collar and tie etc.) |
| General: | For those members not actually following the hounds, but qualifying horses, or bringing a young horse out to see hounds, brown boots, jodhpurs, hacking jacket, collar and tie is permissible dress. Clean and dull polished saddlery always looks well but is sometimes spoilt, together with the appearance of horse and rider, by a white towel under the saddle's if such a thing is necessary a proper numnah should be used. |

Horses

Any breed of horse or pony is suitable for hunting. The horse should be physically sound and adequately fit for an outing of several hours. Highly excitable horses usually calm down considerably after a few times out. In fact, these excitable horses often take intense pleasure in hunting once they get used to the routine.

It is not unusual for the horses to attentively listen to the hounds, turn to face them when they give voice, recognize calls on the hunting horn, and anticipate the moving-out of the field. A kicker should wear a red ribbon and stay at the back of the field. Horses should be reasonably, clean, during hunting season.

We anticipate hunts to last 2 to 3 hours. Though the hunt does not encompass galloping the entire time, the horse should be fit enough for short cantering/galloping spurts of roughly a kilometre before checking (stopping and waiting for hounds to pack-up or find the scent). If at any time you feel your horse is becoming physically stressed, notify your Field master at the stop. She will likely allow you to hack back to the trucks. At no time should a rider simply drop out of the field without notifying the Field master.

It is NOT necessary that your horse jump in order to hunt. There will always be alternative routes around the fences, with plenty of senior members doing the same. You will not be the only "Gater".

Jumps are anticipated to be not more than 110cm Most will be more on the order of 80cm to 90cm.

BE ABLE TO CONTROL YOUR HORSE! Often this means "stepping-up" your bit choice in the hunt field from what you normally use. It is highly improper and dangerous to run ahead of the Master or right-up on the heels of another horse. The inexcusable sin is to step on a Hound or get in the Huntsman's way. Anticipate your horse being stronger in the hunt field while moving with a "herd." If a severe bit is used, such as a gag, be sure you know how to properly use it and practice with it prior to hunting. Excessive punishment of the horse, and dangerous or unhorsemanlike behaviour in the hunt field is frowned-upon. The Master or Field master has full authority to excuse anyone behaving in such a manner from the hunt.

Manners

As in every other social affair, manners play a big part in hunting. The ordinary rules of politeness and courtesy apply, and should always be followed.

Here are some of the important ones as they apply, particularly to Hunting.

- a) Be punctual and arrive in plenty of time so that you are able to prepare your horse and are ready when hounds move off. Nobody likes to be kept waiting so don't have the other members waiting for you to unload your horse and saddle up.

- b) When you arrive at the Meet, say good-morning to the Master and other officers. Touch the peak of your cap with your hand or with your whip if you are carrying one.
- c) If you bring a friend to the hunt, introduce him to the Field Secretary and to the master. Make sure you pay his capping fee.
- d) When crossing a farm, say good-morning to the farmer or any workers you may see. If possible stop and talk to them for a few minutes. Remember, it is only with their permission that we are able to hunt and politeness costs nothing.
- e) In the field, the Officers of the Hunt have right of way so let them be the first through gateways and hold the gate open for them. If you delay them, you delay the whole hunt.
- f) Children should at all times, give way to adults and if hounds are not running gentlemen should give way to lady members.
- g) If your horse refuses a jump and others are waiting move aside and let them go before you make another attempt. This is often the best way anyhow, as your horse then has a lead.
- h) When the hunt is finished, thank the Master, Huntsman and other Officers. They have been working hard for your pleasure and a word of thanks is very much appreciated.
- i) Do what you are told at all times and above all, be courteous and don't argue.

Officers:

The Master;

Is the most important person in a Hunt and his word is law. Anyone who goes out hunting has placed himself under the Masters direction and must be prepared to take orders from him. Not only are the Huntsman and hounds under his command, but the entire field as well. He must be obeyed without question.

The Huntsman;

Is under the direction of the Master is responsible for hounds and has to keep help them to find and hunt. He is also responsible for their feeding and care in the kennels. His job is one of the most important and difficult in the hunt as the success of a days hunting, depends largely on the performance and fitness of hounds.

During the summer, the Huntsman exercises hounds so that they may be thoroughly fit and disciplined by the start of the season. He uses one note on his horn to call hounds to him, others to encourage them to run and to control them in exactly the same way a musterer uses his whistle to control his sheep dogs. For this reason it is always necessary for him to use the same note or notes, for the same command. With Harriers, the main object is to keep them quiet and with their heads down as it is only then that they are working and hunting for the scent.

If hounds are on a line and are checked by say a mob of sheep, the Huntsman rides through the sheep encouraging hounds to follow him until they again find the line. Alternatively, if it is a very large mob, he lifts hounds and takes them to regain the line. When hounds' find it is essential that the Huntsman make a quick get away. He does not waste time by sitting blowing his horn in an Endeavour to get the whole pack away. Any stragglers are left for the Whipper-In to bring up to join the pack at the first check. A good, keen hound will soon learn not to be left and one note on the horn is all that is necessary to bring him up.

In addition to his horn, the Huntsman uses his voice to encourage and cheer his hounds. Above all, hounds should love and respect their Huntsman as it is only then that they will work and do their best to help him.

Deputy-Masters;

Help the Master in the field and take his place when he is absent. When a Deputy-Master is in charge he should be obeyed in every respect as though he were the Master.

The Whippers-In;

Assist the Huntsman with hounds. They are directly responsible to the Huntsman and should act only when he directs them. A Whipper-In to Harriers, should concentrate on watching his Huntsman's requirements and in acting quickly and quietly in putting hounds over to him, stopping hounds from a wrong line or from running heel etc. With Harriers the whip should be used very sparingly, usually only to stop serious rioting such as sheep chasing. Where possible, hounds should be directed by voice as the pistol-shot cracks of a whip cause hounds to lift their heads and stop working. When traveling on the road, one Whip should ride ahead of hounds to check their running forward and to warn any approaching traffic. The other whip should ride half a chain behind the Huntsman to keep the field well clear of hounds and to bring up any stragglers.

The Field Secretary;

Is responsible for the observance of rules and manners in the field. He should see that followers are correctly dressed, that their subscriptions are paid and that they have their buttons up. He collects the cap from any visitors to the Hunt and sees that they are introduced to the Master. He is responsible in seeing that any damage to property is repaired and if you damage anything or see any, report it to him immediately. Even the best of horses make mistakes and you will not be criticized if you accidentally damage a fence. The big crime is in not reporting it as this loses the goodwill of the farmer and may lose the Hunt that country. If your horse is continually balking and cutting up the property, the Field Secretary may ask you to leave the field. If he does so, obey him immediately as any disobedience or breaking of the rules will be reported by him to the Master and you will be disciplined and perhaps even suspended from hunting.

The Committee Members;

Are responsible for the general running and administration of the Hunt and should be given all the help and assistance they require. Be courteous to them and do as they tell you. Don't be afraid to ask them about anything you are not sure of as they are there to help you and will be only too happy to do so.

There is a great deal of work to be done the country hunted over. Hundreds of spars are put up every year, as broken ones have to be replaced, and in many cases they are put up and taken down before and after each Hunt. Broken fences all have to be repaired and all this is usually done by Members of the Committee and one or two keen hunt members. It is very necessary to report damage done promptly and so avoid the risk of stock getting mixed through a broken fence and making more work still.

Hounds

There are three main types of hound's the Beagle, the Harrier and the Fox hound. Here in N.Z. the majority of packs are pure Harriers as these are best for Hare and Drag Hunting. They are bigger than the Beagle but lighter and more rangy than the solid Fox Hound. The breeding of hounds is a matter of long and careful thought.

A good hound is one that is never conspicuous. A conspicuous hound is one that rushes round full of energy and apparently doing all the work. In fact however, his head is up most of the time when it should be down looking for the scent. Another bad fault in a hound is that he may be a "Babbler". Giving tongue and bringing the pack to him under false pretences when he has not found a scent but is indulging in hopeful thinking. An equally bad hound is one that runs "mute"; and may run several paddocks ahead of the pack without giving tongue and spoiling the scent for the others. Hounds may also be "skirters" - those which stay on the outskirts of the pack and avoid the hard work.

The first essential of a good hound is "nose". A hound's vision is very limited as it is only 20 odd inches above ground level and any slight rise above that height blocks it entirely. He is therefore entirely dependent upon his scenting powers. He must also possess drive and energy and a pleasing musical tongue.

In appearance, he should be about 21 inches high with a brainy head, clean neck, sloping shoulders, deep ribs, strong loins, short back, well let down hocks and good close-toed feet with a slight spring of pastern. Apart from the work in the hunting field, a large amount of work goes on in the year so that hounds will arrive in the field fit and able to do their work well.

A pack may consist of 30 to 50 hounds which have to be kept fed, clean, exercised and healthy all the year round. This work is done under the direction of the Master by the Huntsman and his assistants. Their food consists chiefly of horse flesh as it is only on this that they will hunt well. The pack will eat one or two horses a week, all of which have to be collected, killed and fed out to the

hounds. As you can imagine, it is extremely difficult to obtain enough horses so if you have an old pony or know of one that has to be "put down" please let the Huntsman know. It is surely a far better ending for a horse who has enjoyed hunting, sport rather than go to a boiling down works.

Both hounds and kennels have to be kept scrupulously clean and their bedding and water changed daily. All puppies are inoculated against distemper and there are generally one or two in need of attention for cuts, bites or sickness of some sort. All the pack are thoroughly examined after hunting for sore pads, thistles or any injuries they may have incurred. Hounds have to be exercised every day. In summer after the hunting season is over, a walk in a nearby paddock is sufficient, but in the autumn when they have to be got fit for hunting, they must have two hours exercise every day, either along the roads or over the hills. During this period, the young hounds who are going to have their first season's hunting commence their training. The young ones are usually coupled to older ones and thus they learn more easily the words of command.

Many puppies have to be reared each year as it is necessary to keep the number and quality of the pack up and assistance is appreciated from people who are prepared to take a puppy and "walk it" for a year till it is ready to join the pack.

Hounds are referred to always, as "Hounds" not "The Hounds" and never, never dogs. A pack is counted in twos, known as "couples" i.e. 10 ½ couples are 21 hounds. Hounds when born are called "whelps" then become "puppies" and when they start hunting with the pack are "entered". The baying noise hounds make when running is called "giving tongue" or "throwing tongue". Hounds which do not give tongue are "running mute" and will slip away and leave the pack behind. A "babblers" is a hound that gives tongue regardless of whether or not he has the scent and very often misleads the others. Hounds with either of these faults should be removed from the pack. When hounds start to follow the scent the wrong way, that is, the direction from which they came, they are said to be "running heel". When they follow the scent of a rabbit or other animal, than a hare or stag or get out of control, they are said to be "running riot".

When the Hunt commences, the Huntsman will take his hounds into the first paddock and set them to "casting" that is the hounds are searching for the scent. During this time it is very important that hounds are not interfered with in any way. Any loud talk or laughter or a galloping pony will distract them and make them raise their heads and spoil the run. So please remember – keep quiet when hounds are working. The Huntsman will lead his hounds slowly round the paddock until eventually a hound will locate the scent and off they go, all giving tongue. Hounds are then said to be "running".

When they are running, the field should not follow too closely or ride directly behind hounds as they may distract them or injure stragglers. To over-ride hounds is the biggest crime you can commit in hunting. Without the hounds, we would have no hunt so take an interest in them, learn their names and watch them working. You will find it well worthwhile.

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