

FOXHUNTING ETIQUETTE

Foxhunting etiquette is mostly a matter of common sense and common courtesy. However, since foxhunters are only human, they sometimes need to be reminded of what they should and should not do while riding in the field. There are many duties associated with foxhunting, all relative to the major players: the landowners, the hounds, the staff, the Masters and others who ride in the field.

First and most important are the

Duties owed to the landowner. Today, unlike years ago, when most foxhunting enthusiasts also owned the land they hunted on, we are dependent on many non-riding landowners to permit us to cross their property in pursuit of Mr. Reynard. Quite often this can be perilous to their land, crops or livestock; therefore it is paramount that we observe certain duties. **Never ride through newly seeded, plowed, tilled or wet fields.** Stay on the edge and ride single file until you get to a road, dry field, woods or an obvious path. **Never gallop through or by livestock.** If hounds are running, take the longer way around the edge of a field or at least far away from livestock so as not to scare them.

If you break a fence, report it to your Field Master. Offer to help fix it and or pay for lumber to do so. **Never, never leave a gate open that you found closed. This ranks as a capital offense.** Make sure to **thank** many times over the **landowner** who gives us the privilege of access to their farm for our enjoyment. Treat them with respect and as the highest royalty known. WRFH has been blessed with generous and gracious landowners and we want the blessings to continue.

Duties to the hounds: “Hounds please, hounds please!” They always have the right of way. Move over and let them through, and do not crowd them when galloping through woods or fields. Please do not come between the Huntsman and his hounds and make sure your horse learns to respect hounds **before** coming out to hunt. It is also a duty to be **quiet** when hounds are working. Not only is this respectful to the hounds but likewise to fellow hunters. Remember, hounds are trying to find Mr. Charlie for our pleasure, and already have a lot of distractions. Please save “coffee housing” for the tailgate gatherings or the long walk home. Never rate a hound, (i.e. talk them down or use your whip) unless the **Huntsman or Master** asks for your help. The staff has that right and that right alone. **Do** offer to help walk puppies and hounds in the summer. It is rewarding to get to know the hounds personally before the start of the season and you will find an even keener appreciation for their hunting skills by recognizing individuals you spend time with during the summer months. Above all, **never** offer advice to the **Huntsman**. He does this every day; it is his duty to develop a cohesive pack. He has worked diligently and long hours toward that goal. But do **thank him** for the efforts of he and his staff and do not forget to praise the hounds. Everyone responds eagerly to any enthusiasm for their efforts.

FOXHUNTING ETIQUETTE, Cont.

Duties to the Master: These are numerous, too, but quite simple and probably very obvious. Remember to treat your Masters with respect which means several things; be **punctual**, be **properly turned out**, pay your subscription timely, familiarize yourself with terminology, be attentive in the field, offer to help with opening country, and be mannerly. Upon arrival, **pay your respects** to the Masters with a simple and succinct “Good morning”, as, at this time, the Master’s attention is devoted to Hunt business, the staff and hounds. The time to express your gratitude for the day’s sport, of course, is at the end of the hunt.

Duties owed to other riders: The old saying “do unto others----” bodes well in the hunt field. Be respectful to others out for a day with hounds. Leave plenty of room between yourself and the rider in front and behind. Nothing is as annoying, and dangerous too, as a rider constantly running into you from behind. If you cannot hold your horse, put a stronger bit on him or take him to the **back of the field**. IF he is new to hunting, put a green ribbon in his tail. IF he is a kicker, put a **red** ribbon in his tail, and if he continues to be a bad actor, leave him home or send him to a competent trainer. Stay with a rider who gets off to open gates for others. This is common courtesy that should be observed and practiced by all at one time or another. This is not meant to imply that when hounds are at full cry you must give up your place and remain behind, but rather to be followed when one is moving from covert to covert. Always keep up with the field, and if you have to leave, **let the Field Master know**. A Field Master has enough to consider and need not be worried that someone has “come a cropper”. Also, you might find yourself in the most unfortunate position to either foil scent or turn the hunted fox if you fall behind. Remember, foxes do run in circles, and cursing was made for such times. Unfortunately it will be directed at you!

None of the above is meant to distract from the pleasures of this sport but rather to add to its **enjoyment for all**. If ever in doubt as to what is the right thing to do, **ask** one of the Masters. Meanwhile, be happy, be safe and be a Foxhunter!

Best wishes for a wonderful season,

Lynn, David & Barbara