



**PROTECT
THE WILD**

UNSEEN VICTIMS:

THE FORGOTTEN FOXHOUNDS OF HUNTING



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	6
Key Findings and Patterns	7
Methodology	9
Foxhounds and Physical Harm	
Stuck in Fencing	12
Hounds Hit and Kicked	14
Rough Handling	16
Visible Injuries	18
Hounds Hit by Vehicles	20
Foxhounds and Other Welfare Complications	
Foxhounds Lost/Out of Control	23
Foxhounds Stranded and Abandoned	27
Foxhounds and Other Incidents	30
Conclusion	35



UNSEEN VICTIMS:

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Foxhounds used in hunting endure widespread, systemic physical harm and mistreatment—from injuries caused by hazardous environments to violent abuse by hunt staff—and this suffering is both predictable and preventable. Despite industry claims that hunts prioritise hound welfare and only follow artificial trails (a supposedly harmless activity), the evidence shows repeated neglect. Trail hunting is a cover for continued bloodsport, and urgent reforms and independent investigations are needed to protect these unseen victims.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our report, *Unseen Victims: The Forgotten Foxhounds of Hunting*, exposes the ongoing welfare crisis faced by foxhounds involved in hunts across England and Wales between 2022 and 2025. While public and political debate largely focuses on the ethics of hunting wildlife, the treatment of foxhounds—sentient dogs capable of feeling pain and fear—remains overlooked and concealed by the hunting industry. The industry’s misleading claim that banning hunting would lead to the mass killing of foxhounds masks the harsher reality: routine culling and neglect are already widespread.

Commissioned by Protect the Wild, this report provides the first comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of foxhound welfare over three hunting seasons. Drawing on 1,909 reports from 102 anti-hunting groups on 132 hunts, it documents the conditions these dogs endure, categorises the many welfare issues they face, and evaluates the profound impact on their health and wellbeing.

Key findings reveal a disturbing pattern of welfare failures:

- A total of 2,444 welfare incidents were recorded, with the number of incidents increasing in the latest season despite fewer hunts being monitored (due to hunts folding or amalgamating).
- “Hounds out of control or lost” was the most frequent concern, accounting for nearly half of all incidents and showing a worsening trend.
- Incidents involving physical harm such as hounds stuck in fencing, stranded, hit or kicked, or hit by vehicles remained prevalent or increased.
- Multiple welfare concerns often occurred within single hunt meets, indicating systemic mistreatment rather than isolated problems.
- No significant improvements in key welfare areas have been seen over three years, with some indicators showing declines in supervision and safety.


This report exposes ongoing neglect, injury, and dangerous conditions faced by foxhounds, revealing the hunting industry’s failure to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The evidence underscores the urgent need for meaningful reforms that prioritise the health, dignity, and protection of these often-forgotten victims of hunting.



INTRODUCTION

Foxhounds are deeply woven into the traditions of hunting in England and Wales, yet their welfare remains one of the least visible and most neglected aspects of the debate. While much public and political focus centres on the ethics of hunting wildlife, the treatment of the foxhounds themselves—sentient beings capable of feeling fear, pain, and joy—is rarely scrutinised. This lack of attention has allowed systemic welfare problems to persist, hidden behind a carefully maintained industry smokescreen.


Worse still, hunts have weaponised concern for their hounds as a manipulative tactic to oppose a proper ban on hunting. They push the narrative, “If hunting is banned, all the foxhounds will be killed,” and focus their campaigning on saving the hounds who are “at risk” in an attempt to appeal to a nation of dog lovers. But the brutal truth they conceal is that most foxhounds are already routinely killed—shot in the head and discarded once they are too old, injured, or deemed unfit for hunting. This is something Protect the Wild proved back in 2021 following undercover footage of the Beaufort Hunt kennels. This report reveals that the real risks to foxhounds is not a ban—it is the hunting industry itself.



ALL LEGAL HUNTING IS UNDER THREAT

Our Hounds Are At Risk

On April Fools' Day, the Government announced plans to consult on a ban of all legal hunting with hounds. It wasn't a joke — it was a line in the sand. A deliberate move to silence a way of life, to erase a tradition, and to put every working hound at risk. If we don't fight for them now, who will?



The British Hound Sports Association (BHSA) is your representative body for all hound sports.

- This is not just about trail hunting. It's about the future of every hound represented by the BHSA — and every person whose way of life depends on them.
- The threat is real. The time is now. And our hounds are depending on us.
- If we don't defend legal hunting now, no one else will.

Hunts have consistently refused independent, scientific assessments of foxhound welfare, health, or behaviour.

Instead, public knowledge relies on outdated hunting literature, not contemporary, evidence-based research. This glaring lack of impartial oversight motivated Protect the Wild to commission this essential report.

Increasingly, evidence from hunt monitors, saboteurs, and concerned citizens exposes widespread neglect, injury, and poor treatment of foxhounds. Yet, without transparency or enforcement, these abuses remain hidden behind the industry’s tightly controlled narrative. Only through the persistent efforts of anti-hunting groups do these truths emerge.

Undercover investigations have uncovered shocking practices, including physical abuse and the inhumane killing of foxhounds once they are no longer “useful.” These dogs deserve the same compassion, protection, and legal rights as any family pet—a fact affirmed by veterinary experts including those at the Royal Veterinary College of Surgeons. Yet they have been denied these basic rights.

This report fills a vital gap in public understanding by offering a thorough evaluation of foxhound welfare over the past three hunting seasons. Through careful documentation and analysis, it exposes the true conditions these dogs face, categorises the many welfare issues reported, and assesses the impact on their wellbeing.

Most importantly, it shines a spotlight on foxhounds, often the forgotten victims of the hunting, and serves as a powerful call for meaningful reform that prioritises their health, safety, and dignity in an industry that has failed them for far too long.

KEY FINDINGS AND PATTERNS

The data gathered from the 2022 to 2025 hunting seasons exposes a deeply concerning and persistent pattern of welfare failures among hunts across England and Wales. Throughout this period, large numbers of foxhounds were subjected to harm, neglect, and hazardous conditions during hunt meets—many of which were entirely preventable. Despite sustained public scrutiny and awareness, there has been little to no meaningful improvement in the safety or supervision of these animals. In fact, multiple indicators point to a decline in welfare standards in certain areas, with serious incidents continuing to occur at an alarmingly high rate. The key findings below highlight the most frequent and widespread welfare issues observed during the monitoring of 132 hunts at 1,909 hunt meets between August 2022 and April 2025.

HIGH AND PERSISTENT WELFARE INCIDENT RATES:

- Across three seasons, welfare incidents involving foxhounds during hunts remain alarmingly high.
- In the 2024-2025 season alone, welfare incidents were recorded in about 46.7% of all hunt meets monitored (693 out of 1,483 meets).
- The total number of welfare incidents exceeded the number of affected meets, showing multiple problems per meet are common.



YEARLY INCIDENT TOTALS:

- 2022-2023: 827 welfare incidents over 637 affected meets.
- 2023-2024: 762 welfare incidents over 579 affected meets.
- 2024-2025: 855 welfare incidents over 693 affected meets.
- Despite some fluctuations, the total incidents show no significant improvement and even a slight increase in the latest season.

TYPES OF WELFARE CONCERNS:

- “**Out of control / Lost**” hounds were the most frequent issue, with incidents rising from 382 (2022-23) to 423 (2024-25).
- **Stranded hounds** also increased steadily from 47 to 69 incidents, meaning hunts seem to be leaving hounds behind more frequently.
- **Hounds stuck in fencing** nearly tripled from 16 incidents in 2022-23 to 48 in 2024-25, indicating growing risks of entrapment.

- Physical harms such as **hounds hit or kicked** and **rough handling** persist, with some increase in the latest year.
- **Hounds hit by vehicles** remained consistent at around a dozen incidents per season, with at least one fatal incident every year.
- **Visible injuries** to hounds were consistently reported, though slightly fewer in 2024-25 compared to previous years.
- “Other incidents” — including exposure to severe weather, dangerous road situations, or falls — have slightly decreased but still represent a significant problem.

OVERALL WELFARE RISKS REMAIN HIGH:

- The data reveals ongoing and varied welfare challenges for foxhounds during hunts, including physical harm, neglect, poor supervision, and dangerous environmental exposures.
- Several categories show increases in frequency, suggesting that welfare standards have not improved and that foxhounds continue to face serious risks.

Across all seasons, many meets saw multiple incidents, for instance, in 2024–2025: 693 meets saw 855 incidents, meaning many meets featured more than one welfare concern. This points to an ongoing and systemic pattern of mistreatment, rather than isolated events.

METHODOLOGY

Protect the Wild’s Unseen Victims: The Forgotten Foxhounds of Hunting draws on an extensive three-year dataset. Between August 2022 and April 2025, we reviewed and analysed 1,909 reports, in which at least one welfare incident occurred, from hunt monitors, saboteurs, members of the public, and journalists. These reports were sourced from social media, local and national news outlets, and direct communications with eyewitnesses and those who recorded welfare incidents. In total, 132 registered hunts across England and Wales were identified as having foxhounds exposed to welfare risks during this period.

This report employs a qualitative methodology to systematically analyse welfare incident occurrence involving foxhounds. Each incident was reviewed in detail to identify and categorise the nature of the harm or welfare concern described. This approach allows for the recognition of patterns and themes within the data, capturing the complexity and diversity of welfare issues beyond mere numerical counts. Additionally, significant cases of neglect and critical incidents are highlighted and discussed in detail throughout the report to provide deeper insight into the severity of the challenges faced by foxhounds.

To facilitate quantitative analysis, each identified welfare concern category was assigned a unique numerical code, ranging from 1 to 8. This coding process enabled the conversion of qualitative descriptions into quantitative data, allowing for statistical aggregation and comparison across incidents and seasons. The combined qualitative and quantitative approach provides a comprehensive understanding of both the specific types of harm experienced by foxhounds and their frequency within the monitored hunts.

CATEGORIES OF WELFARE CONCERNS INVOLVING HOUNDS

Code	Welfare Concern	Description
1	Hounds stuck in fencing	Instances where hounds became trapped in fencing, leading to potential injuries and distress.
2	Stranded hounds	Situations where hounds were left stranded, facing threats like dehydration, harsh weather, and traffic accidents.
3	Hounds hit or kicked	Reports of physical contact, by human or non-human animals (horses), causing injury and psychological harm.



Code	Welfare Concern	Description
4	Hounds hit by vehicles	Incidents where hounds were struck by cars, resulting in minor injuries, serious injuries, and in some cases, fatalities.
5	Hounds with visible injuries	Cases of visible wounds or injuries—both minor and severe—occurring during the hunt meet.
6	Hounds being inappropriately handled	Reports of hounds being lifted, restrained, or thrown inappropriately.
7	Other incidents	A broad category including cases where hounds fell from heights, became trapped in hazardous conditions, were taken out during severe weather, or ran on roads - but were supervised by hunt staff, though still caused danger.
8	Hounds out of control or lost	This category includes incidents where hounds were unsupervised, trespassing, ignoring commands, splitting from the pack, rioting on wildlife, or when the hunt was unaware of the location of individual hounds or groups of them.

RESULTS

The data collected provides a detailed overview of welfare incidents involving foxhounds during monitored hunts. The table below summarises the number of hunts monitored each year, the number of hunt meets where at least one welfare incident was recorded, and the total number of individual welfare incidents documented. It is important to note that multiple incidents often occurred within a single meet, so the total number of welfare incidents exceeds the number of affected meets.

Year	Total number of hunts monitored	Total hunt meets with welfare incidents occurrence	Total number of welfare incidents to occur
2022-2023	80	637	827
2023-2024	94	579	762
2024-2025	86	693	855

The following table breaks down the specific types of welfare concerns observed over the same period. These range from direct physical harms—such as hounds becoming trapped in fencing or being hit by vehicles—to issues of poor supervision and control, including hounds being lost or stranded. The data reveals persistent welfare problems, with several categories showing increases in frequency, underscoring ongoing risks and neglect faced by foxhounds during hunts. Each category illustrates distinct patterns of welfare challenges, providing a comprehensive insight into the conditions endured by these dogs.

FOXHOUND WELFARE INCIDENTS (2022-2025)

Welfare Concern & Description	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Stuck in fencing – Hounds became trapped in fencing, leading to potential injuries and distress.	16	29	48
Stranded hounds – Hounds left behind or lost, facing threats like dehydration, harsh weather, and traffic accidents.	47	67	69
Hounds hit or kicked – Reports of hounds being struck by hunt staff, causing physical injury and psychological trauma.	12	12	17
Hounds hit by vehicles – Hounds struck by cars, leading to injury or, in some cases, death.	13	12	13
Visible injuries – Hounds seen with wounds or injuries, ranging from minor cuts to severe trauma.	82	86	64
Rough handling – Hounds lifted, dragged, restrained or thrown inappropriately by hunt staff.	21	18	25
Other incidents – Miscellaneous welfare concerns not captured above (e.g., hounds dangerously on the road but with hunt staff supervision, hounds out in severe weather, hounds falling from heights, or becoming stuck in deep water).	254	210	196
Out of control / Lost – Hounds observed running loose unsupervised in public areas, private land, or on roads, posing risk to themselves and others.	382	328	423
Total Incidents	827	762	855

In the 2024-2025 season, Protect the Wild reviewed 1,483 hunt meets, with welfare incidents reported in 693 of them—an incident rate of approximately 46.7%. Although the total number of meets reviewed in previous seasons wasn’t recorded, we can estimate based on this rate.

For 2022-2023, with 637 welfare incidents reported, the estimated total meets would be around 1,363. Similarly, in 2023-2024, 579 incidents suggest roughly 1,239 meets. These estimates highlight a consistent pattern of welfare concerns across multiple seasons with at least one welfare concern occurring close to 50% of observed hunt meets.

FOXHOUNDS AND PHYSICAL HARM

To fully understand the impact of hunting on foxhounds, it is essential to examine the physical harm they endure. In this section, we focus on welfare concerns that directly cause injury to the dogs. These include incidents where hounds become stuck in fencing, are hit or kicked, collide with road vehicles, display visible injuries, and experience rough handling by hunt staff. By reviewing these categories alongside real-life cases, we reveal the harsh physical toll hunting takes on these animals. It is important to note that many incidents overlap; for example, a foxhound may collide with a vehicle and continue running without obvious visible injury, while in other cases, a collision results in clear and serious injury—meaning the incident would be recorded under both relevant categories.

STUCK IN FENCING

One of the clearest and most concerning trends in the physical harm data is the steady rise in incidents of foxhounds becoming stuck in fencing. This category nearly tripled over

the three-year period—from 16 incidents in the 2022-2023 season, to 29 in 2023-2024, and then to 48 in 2024-2025. This sharp increase suggests a worsening failure in basic safety oversight during hunts, particularly in how hounds are managed in relation to terrain and physical hazards.

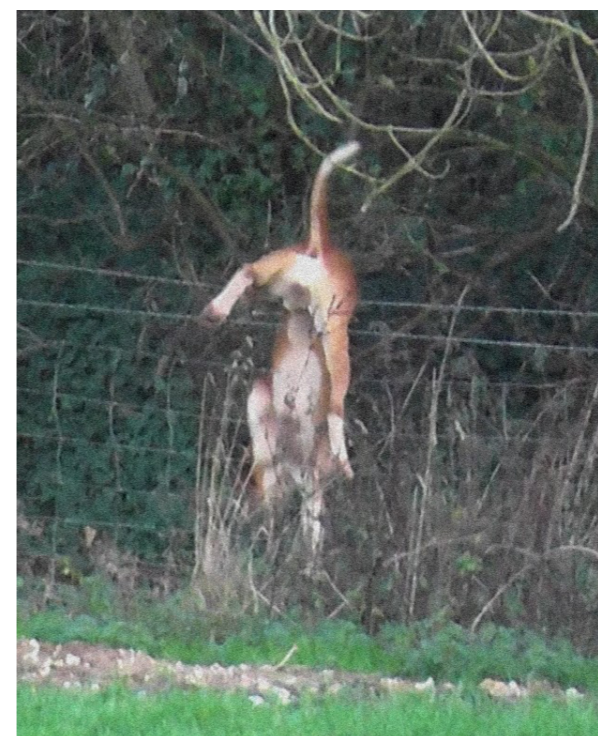


Photograph of Eggesford Hunt hound trapped in barbed wire being freed by Devon County Hunt Sabs.

In November 2024, Devon County Hunt Saboteurs encountered a harrowing example of this risk while monitoring the Eggesford Hunt. They discovered a foxhound tangled

in wire fencing, hanging by her back leg. No hunt staff were present. In their account, “One of our vehicles waved down field master Hugh Trerise and encouraged him to send someone to help with wire cutters. That help never arrived.” After approximately 15 minutes, saboteurs managed to free the suffering hound using only their bare hands.

This incident raises profound welfare concerns. How long had the hound been there before help arrived? Had saboteurs not intervened, would she have been rescued at all? The inaction from hunt staff and even the hunt master reflects a worrying disregard for the wellbeing of their dogs. Why was no one aware that a hound was missing? Why did none of the supporters step in to assist—or even seem to notice? This apparent indifference exposes systemic failings in how hunts monitor and care for their hounds, undermining repeated industry claims of prioritising animal welfare.



Boxing Day meet of the South Dorset Hunt hound stuck on fencing, North Dorset Hunt Sabs (2022).

The Eggesford case is far from an isolated incident. In 2022, North Dorset Hunt Saboteurs captured another disturbing example during the Boxing Day meet of the South Dorset Hunt—one of the most high-profile days in the hunting calendar, when public and media attention is at its peak. Despite the heightened visibility, a foxhound was seen suffering after becoming hooked on barbed wire. The soft underbelly of the dog had been caught, illustrating just how easily these animals can be wounded by common rural fencing.

Cases like this demonstrate that hounds becoming trapped in fencing is not a freak occurrence—it’s a foreseeable and repeated risk that hunts consistently fail to prevent.

Why are hounds repeatedly ending up stuck in fencing, including barbed wire? No competent or humane trail layer would chart a course through such dangerous terrain—and tellingly, there is no recorded case of a trail being laid over barbed fencing. The far more likely explanation is that hounds aren’t following artificial trails at all, but are instead chasing live quarry such as foxes. While foxes can slip through gaps or hedgerows, the larger, pack-driven hounds are left entangled and injured.

This pattern highlights not only the serious risks hounds face, but also exposes the hollow nature of the trail hunting defence. The growing number of fencing-related incidents reveals the real cost of hunting—not just to wildlife, but to the very dogs hunters claim to care about. If hounds were truly following laid trails, or if hunts genuinely prioritised their welfare, they would not be routinely injured in terrain no responsible route-setter would use.

The rise in reported incidents likely reflects increased monitoring by anti-hunting groups during the 2024/2025 season, but the true number of hounds injured on fencing is probably much higher. The Countryside Alliance estimates 12,000 annual hunt meets. Based on monitored data:

Season	Incidents Recorded	Total Meets Observed	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	16	1,363*	~140
2023-2024	29	1,239*	~281
2024-2025	48	1,483	~389

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

Applied nationally, this suggests between **140 and 389 hounds** get stuck or injured on fencing each year—far more than reported.

HOUNDS HIT AND KICKED

While fencing injuries reveal the physical dangers hounds face during hunts, another deeply troubling threat is the direct violence inflicted on them—whether from being kicked by horses or beaten by hunt staff.

These assaults often happen in plain sight and are captured on camera by monitors and saboteurs. Yet, as with many aspects of foxhound welfare, what’s filmed is likely only the tip of the iceberg. Whether a horse lashes out in chaos or a huntsman delivers punishment, the result is the same: hounds suffer in environments where cruelty is not just common, but often excused or hidden.

In 2023, Mendip Farmers Hunt Saboteurs filmed hunt master George Pullen violently thrashing a hound, prompting an RSPCA investigation. In February 2025, North London Hunt Saboteurs recorded a hound at a Thurlow Hunt meet, likely being killed by a kick to the head from a horse. Just weeks later, the same hunt was filmed again—this time as a huntsman rode his horse over a hound, which rolled and yelped in pain. The rider didn’t stop, didn’t check, and didn’t care. These are not isolated incidents—they’re part of a culture where violence towards working animals is tolerated, minimised, or outright ignored.

Reported incidents of hounds being hit or kicked stayed at 12 in both 2022–2023 and 2023–2024, rising to 17 in 2024–2025. Based on monitored meets:

Season	Incidents Recorded	Total Meets Observed	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	16	1,363*	~140
2023-2024	29	1,239*	~281
2024-2025	48	1,483	~389

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

These figures likely represent just a fraction of the true scale of abuse. They rely entirely on meets observed by anti-hunt groups—meaning countless incidents go unrecorded, especially behind closed doors in hunt kennels, where saboteurs and monitors have no access. For example, footage seen by Protect the Wild from 2016 exposed Beadle Hunt staff beating hounds in kennels for simply going the wrong way. In 2023, Kimblewick huntsman Guy Fritze was reportedly sacked after allegedly almost beating a hound to death. Such abuse is rarely exposed unless reported by insiders—which is unlikely, given both the bias and desensitisation to violence against animals within the hunting community. Such violence is often normalised and what would horrify the public is too often routine behind the scenes, hidden by a culture of silence, desensitisation, and denial.

These incidents are just the visible tip of a darker reality. From a young age, foxhounds are trained through fear: conditioned to respond to the whip, a tool of pain and control rather than guidance. Physical punishment is normalised, with the whip becoming a

symbol of threat. This runs counter to modern research on canine behaviour, which strongly supports positive reinforcement over aversive methods.

This fear-based, violent training environment may help explain why hounds are sometimes brutally beaten—or even reportedly killed—when hunt staff believe they’ve misbehaved. Repeated exposure to such cruelty can desensitise staff, making violence seem routine and acceptable. In this culture of intimidation, any disobedience risks severe punishment.

Even obvious dangers—like hounds being kicked by horses—are routinely ignored, exposing a disturbing disregard for animal welfare. At one meet in November 2024 a rider from the Puckeridge and Essex Union Hunt was filmed by Hertfordshire Hunt Saboteurs striking a horse after it kicked a hound. The saboteurs noted,

“One poor horse is obviously uncomfortable with a pack of dogs so close and kicks out... the huntsman barely casts a second glance at the commotion.”

This reaction is revealing. Rather than question why hounds are repeatedly put in harm’s way, the rider blames the horse—deflecting attention from the real issue: dangerous hunt practices. Worse still, the huntsman didn’t even check if the hound was injured.

The incident highlights the wider problem: both hounds and horses are treated as expendable tools. For most people, a yelp from a pet would spark immediate concern. In hunting, it barely registers.



Photo by North London Hunt Sabs

ROUGH HANDLING

Rough handling of foxhounds is not rare—it’s a recurring and serious welfare concern that reflects a systemic problem within hunting culture. Dragging, yanking, scruffing, and even throwing dogs are all behaviours that would be condemned outright if inflicted on pet dogs. Yet within hunts, this treatment is routinely dismissed as normal or necessary. It is neither. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has made it clear: foxhounds are entitled to the same ethical consideration as any other dog.

Data from observed hunt meets over the last three years show rough handling recorded at:

Season	Incidents Recorded	Total Meets Observed	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	21	1,363*	~185
2023-2024	18	1,239*	~174
2024-2025	25	1,483	~203

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

This equates to an estimate of 174–203 incidents annually, but this figure only reflects what’s been seen and recorded. In reality, the true number is likely far higher. Hunts often change their behaviour when they know they are being monitored, and rough handling is frequently missed or goes unreported. Saboteurs and monitors are not present at every meet, and even when they are, not every interaction is visible or captured on film.

What makes this issue even more disturbing is that we can often see the consequences of rough handling in the hounds themselves. Anti-hunt groups repeatedly report hounds displaying clear signs of fear when approached or handled by hunt staff, signs no dog should be showing around their supposed caregivers.

One striking example comes from footage taken by Hull Wildlife Protectors during a Holderness Hunt meet, in October 2023. A hound named Jacob had been left behind near a main road and was found by a member of the public. When hunt staff were asked to help retrieve him, they initially refused. Eventually, the huntsman’s wife arrived and roughly dragged Jacob by the scruff. His body language was unmistakable: head low, tail tucked, body tense, licking his lips—classic signs of fear. And yet, moments earlier, Jacob had calmly followed the member of the public and monitors, tail wagging, happily taking treats. The contrast speaks volumes.

Despite their size, foxhounds should never be lifted or restrained by the scruff—a practice widely regarded as painful and outdated. Still, it continues. In October 2024, Weymouth Animal Rights photographed the South Dorset hunts master lifting a hound by the scruff. When challenged, he simply said the dog had “been a bad dog.” That offhand

remark is telling, it exposes a culture where violence is not only normalised but excused as discipline.

It is especially alarming that despite how frequently hounds stray or get lost during hunts (as detailed elsewhere in this report), most hunts do not carry slip leads: basic, humane tools for safely handling dogs. **Instead, physical force is the default.**

Taken together, these examples point to a deeply troubling reality: rough handling is not the exception—it’s a symptom of a culture that prioritises obedience, performance, and control over the welfare of the very dogs it relies on. What’s being revealed, through video, through body language, through repeated incidents, is a systemic failure to treat foxhounds with even the most basic compassion and care. And the true scale of that failure is still largely hidden from view.



Hound roughly lifted by the hunts master. Photo by Weymouth Animal Rights

VISIBLE INJURIES

Another important indicator of foxhound welfare is the frequency of visible injuries observed by monitors and saboteurs during hunt meets. These injuries can include cuts, bruises, unidentified lumps, limping, or bleeding—signs that highlight the physical toll hunting places on these animals.

The table below summarises the data collected over three hunting seasons, showing the number of monitored meets, recorded visible injuries, the percentage of meets where injuries were observed, and an estimate of the national scale based on approximately 12,000 annual hunt meets:

Season	Visible Injuries	Monitored Meets	% of Meets with Injuries	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	82	1,363*	6.02%	~722
2023-2024	86	1,239*	6.94%	~833
2024-2025	64	1,483	4.32%	~518

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

While the data shows some fluctuation in the percentage of hunt meets where visible injuries are reported, the figures still suggest that hundreds of foxhounds sustain injuries each year during hunts. However, these numbers likely underestimate the true extent of harm. One potential reason for the drop in reported injuries during the 2024/2025 season is that hunts have become more attuned to being monitored by saboteurs and wildlife observers, and may be adjusting their practices accordingly.

Injured or more vulnerable hounds may be held back from public-facing meets, or quickly removed from the scene before monitors can assess their condition. There are even concerns that injured hounds are being deliberately hidden to avoid scrutiny and prevent damning evidence from reaching the public. Additionally, some hunts may feel growing pressure to present a façade of good animal care—especially in areas

where past reports have exposed hounds left visibly distressed or struggling to keep up with the pack. These tactics contribute to underreporting and further obscure the true scale of the welfare crisis facing foxhounds.

That crisis becomes even more apparent when we assess the dangerous environments hounds are frequently led into—exposing a deeper truth: hunts cannot genuinely be laying safe, controlled trails. The repeated injuries and high-risk situations hounds encounter strongly suggest that the practice of trail laying is little more than a smokescreen.



Photo by North London Hunt Sabs

For example, in 2023 it was reported by Kernow Sabs, Monitors and Animal Rights Team as well as West Cornwall Hunt Saboteurs that multiple hounds fell down a disused mineshaft during a hunt meet. The area was clearly marked with signs on a map, yet hounds—unaware of such dangers—entered regardless. If a human trail layer had genuinely laid a route, they would not have chosen such a hazardous location. This incident reflects a fundamental failure to protect the hounds and raises serious doubts about whether a trail was laid at all. The far more plausible explanation is that the hounds were following the scent of a live animal, not a carefully planned trail.

In another case, which took place in February this year, North Dorset Hunt Saboteurs filmed hounds from the Cattistock Hunt trapped in a pit of thick cow slurry. One hound, captured on drone footage, appeared to nearly drown before being hurriedly removed in a hunt support vehicle—preventing saboteurs from checking their condition. Incidents like this are not rare or isolated; they reflect a consistent pattern of recklessness. They further reinforce the conclusion that trails are either not being laid at all, or if they are, they are being laid through terrain that is unsafe and entirely unsuitable for hounds, putting them at risk.

Further evidence of hunts’ disregard for hound welfare comes from reports by Teesside Anti Blood Sports (TABS) in 2025, and Mendip Hunt Saboteurs in 2024. At a Zetland and Hurworth Hunt meet, TABS filmed a female hound with a deep gash between her thigh and abdomen. Despite the obvious pain and risk of infection, she was reportedly made to continue hunting for two to three hours. According to TABS, the hunt only removed her after they began

filming and speaking out—suggesting the hunt knew their actions were unacceptable but acted only when confronted.



During that time, the injured hound struggled to keep up with the pack and was seen shaking during brief moments of rest, likely from pain and exhaustion. Forcing her to continue not only prolonged her suffering but increased the risk of infection. Any responsible dog owner would have sought immediate veterinary care.

In another incident, reported by Mendip Hunt Saboteurs in January 2024, a hound was seen being made to run on three legs for the entire day. Forcing a lame dog to work in such a condition is deeply inappropriate and highlights the unacceptable treatment some hounds endure.

These are not isolated incidents. They form part of a larger, deeply troubling picture. When the welfare of hounds is closely scrutinised, the trail hunting façade quickly collapses. These dogs are not being guided along controlled, humane routes. They are being led into dangerous environments, suffering preventable injuries, and enduring unnecessary distress—all to maintain a blood sport that depends on secrecy and denial. The evidence is mounting, and the conclusion is clear: so-called trail hunting is not a legitimate or humane activity. It is simply a rebranded form of hunting with hounds—one where the cruelty continues, and it is the hounds who suffer most.

HOUNDS HIT BY VEHICLES

One of the most worrying welfare concerns is the risk of foxhounds being hit by road vehicles. This typically occurs when hounds run across roads with fast-moving traffic during hunts. Although the number of reported incidents each year in this category is smaller compared to others, the consequences can be a lot more severe. Our research indicates that, tragically, at least one hound a hunting season has died as a result of road traffic collisions, underscoring the serious and sometimes fatal dangers these animals face beyond the hunt itself.

Season	Incidents of Hounds Hit by Vehicles	Monitored Meets	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	13	1,363*	~114
2023-2024	12	1,239*	~116
2024-2025	13	1,483	~106

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

One of the most harrowing incidents in recent years occurred in November 2022, when Sheffield Hunt Saboteurs and Calder Valley Hunt Saboteurs were monitoring the Grove and Rufford Hunt. During the meet, the hunt completely lost control of their hounds which subsequently led to some spilling out onto a dangerously fast and busy road, tragically, one was fatally struck by a vehicle. Footage shared by the group shows the hound in their final moments, exhibiting agonal gasping—a laboured, reflexive breathing pattern that signals extreme distress and typically occurs before death. The video offers a disturbing glimpse into the consequences of hunts losing control, or allowing hounds to follow live scents onto busy roads.

Amid the chaos, Calder Valley Hunt Saboteurs reported having to intervene themselves by slowing traffic to prevent further collisions. They described a near-miss involving a lorry, which had to swerve to avoid hitting another hound. This not only exposes the risks to

the animals involved but also underscores the serious threat posed to public safety. When hunts lose control of their packs, it’s not just the hounds that are at risk—drivers, passengers, and bystanders can be endangered too.

An equally disturbing case was reported in 2023 by Devon County Hunt Saboteurs. Two hounds from the suspected Mid Devon Hunt were struck by vehicles on the A30. The first was found injured by members of the public after the hunt had seemingly already vacated the area. Despite being rushed to a veterinary clinic, the hound reportedly suffered a broken spine and had to be euthanised. Later that same day, the saboteurs were alerted to a second hound found dead by the roadside. When they attended the scene, they confirmed the grim discovery.

This deeply troubling incident illustrates a shocking level of disregard for the welfare of the hounds. Not only were two dogs fatally



Photo by Sheffield Hunt Sabs

hit by vehicles, but they were also apparently abandoned by the hunt, either because the hunt was unaware the hounds were missing or, worse, because it failed to act on that knowledge. Both scenarios point to a profound failure in duty of care.

Again In 2024, a particularly tragic incident was reported by the BBC News, in which three hounds (Muxloe, Topper, and Shogun) reportedly belonging to the Pytchley with Woodland Hunt, were killed after colliding with vehicles on the A43 near Hannington, Northamptonshire. Despite the gravity of the event, police subsequently confirmed that no charges would be filed, as they determined there was no criminal case to answer.

The issue re-emerged in 2025 when Three Counties Hunt Saboteurs reported that hounds from the Croome and West Warwickshire Hunt had been killed after straying onto railway tracks. This incident was highlighted by the League Against Cruel Sports and reported in a newspaper article reviewed by Protect the Wild.



Photo by Devon County Hunt Sabs

Emily Lawrence, Campaigns Manager for LACS, stated:

“The hunt’s behaviour was entirely inconsistent with trail hunting, with a fox being chased through private gardens, across a busy road, and onto Network Rail land, where it would have been absurd to have laid a trail.”

These incidents exemplify the failures of so-called “trail hunting”, often described as a smokescreen to conceal the pursuit of live quarry. Even assuming artificial trails are laid in good faith, evidence shows that hounds frequently run off-trail, lose control, or chase live animals. This not only endangers the hounds themselves but also poses significant risks to public safety.

Despite the clear dangers and repeated fatalities, no hunt has been prosecuted in relation to hound deaths on roads or for endangering public safety. This ongoing lack

of accountability highlights a critical gap in enforcement and regulation.

However, a potentially landmark development in this context is the forthcoming trial scheduled for November 2025 at Chester Magistrates' Court. Three senior members of the Cheshire Hunt will face charges related to allowing their hounds to run dangerously out of control during a hunting meet in January 2024. This case is notable as one of the first significant legal challenges to hunting practices on the grounds of hound welfare and control.

The defence has acknowledged the national significance of the case. Stephen Welford, a solicitor frequently representing hunts, described the trial as “of national importance,” noting police concerns that the incident “could have caused injury” to both hounds and members of the public. Welford further cautioned that a successful prosecution could threaten the continuation of hunts nationwide. This is a revealing comment. If holding hunts accountable for hounds on roads poses such a serious threat to their operations, it speaks volumes about how often these situations occur—and how little control hunt staff have. It also underscores just how vulnerable these beautiful dogs are when left to run loose near

traffic, unsupervised and unprotected.

This case highlights the urgent need for greater accountability of hunts. The recurring pattern of hounds being injured or killed on roads—and sometimes then abandoned—reflects a widespread failure in how foxhounds are managed during hunt meets. Current practices around trail hunting do not effectively protect hounds from harm, placing both the animals and the public at serious and avoidable risk.

Although incidents of hounds being hit by vehicles occur less frequently than other hunting-related injuries, they carry a disproportionately higher risk of fatality and severe harm, resulting in grave welfare consequences. These road-related fatalities and injuries represent a critical issue for both animal welfare and public safety, demanding immediate, stringent oversight, enforcement, and reform. One potential avenue for reform could be prosecuting hunts under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 when hounds are endangered or injured on public roads. Without decisive action, these preventable tragedies will continue to inflict suffering on the animals involved and pose ongoing dangers to communities impacted by hunting activities.

FOXHOUNDS AND OTHER WELFARE IMPLICATIONS



Beyond the direct physical injuries foxhounds suffer, they frequently face distressing circumstances such as becoming lost, running uncontrolled, or being abandoned and left stranded. These incidents not only place the hounds at grave risk but also reveal deep-rooted failures in the management and oversight of hunting packs. Compounding this, a range of other serious welfare incidents—including physical abuse, disease and death, and chronic neglect—add to the extensive suffering these animals endure. The following sections explore these wider welfare concerns in detail, drawing on comprehensive data to expose the true scale, severity, and hidden nature of this ongoing welfare crisis.

FOXHOUNDS LOST/OUT OF CONTROL

Among the many welfare challenges faced by foxhounds, the issue of hounds becoming lost or running out of control stands out for both its frequency and severity. Between the 2022 and 2025 hunting seasons, around 28% of monitored hunt meets involved hounds seen running loose and unsupervised across public roads, private land, or open countryside. In the 2024–2025 season alone, 423 out of 855 recorded welfare incidents specifically involved hounds who were lost or out of control.

When extrapolated to a national scale—including the thousands of unmonitored hunts taking place each year—the scale of this problem becomes deeply alarming. Based on incident rates from observed meets, it's estimated that more than 3,400 incidents of uncontrolled or lost hounds occurred during the 2024–2025 season alone. Thousands of hunting dogs are potentially exposed to danger each year due to a widespread and systemic failure of control and oversight.



Season	Incidents of Out of Control/Lost Hounds	Monitored Meets	% of Meets Involved	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	382	1,363*	28.02%	~3,349
2023-2024	328	1,239*	26.47%	~3,169
2024-2025	423	1,483	28.51%	~3,437

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

Such widespread loss of control over hunting hounds would be deemed entirely unacceptable under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which places a clear legal duty on handlers to protect the welfare and safety of animals in their care. Yet despite repeated, well-documented breaches, no hunt has ever been prosecuted under this legislation. One ongoing case—the Cheshire Hunt—marks the first time a hunt has been charged in relation to out-of-control hounds on public roads, but such action is long overdue.

While a handful of hunts have received Community Protection Notices (CPNs) or warnings for dangerous or out-of-control hounds, these measures have proven insufficient. In stark contrast, ordinary dog owners face prosecution under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 if their pets pose a threat in public. It is clear that hunts are being held to a far lower standard, despite the far greater scale of risk they pose to both animals and the public.

The tragic consequences of these systemic failings have already been felt. In one of the most high-profile incidents, a much-loved family cat named Mini was mauled and killed by Western Hunt hounds during a 2021 hound exercise. Footage showed the hounds attacking Mini outside her home, followed by a huntsman discarding her body over a

fence in an apparent attempt to conceal the incident. This deeply disturbing case illustrates both the lack of control and the absence of accountability for the welfare of animals affected by hunting.



Images of Mini and the driveway attack (2021)

Other incidents during formal meets highlight the same pattern. In February 2025 the Locals opposed to the Albrighton and Woodland Hunt, reported hounds from the Albrighton and Woodland Hunt brought traffic to a standstill. With no hunt staff in sight, West Midlands Ambulance Service workers were forced to manage traffic and prevent a potential disaster as the hounds ran uncontrolled across a busy road. This was not only a risk to human life, but a situation that placed the hounds themselves in grave danger. Still, no formal action was taken against the hunt.

Video evidence from recent seasons shows how commonly hounds are allowed to spill out onto roads during a chase. In February 2024 a video posted by Dorset Hunt Monitors showed hounds from the Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt chasing a live fox across a road, again with no staff in sight. In December 2023, West Midlands Hunt Saboteurs documented hounds from the North Cotswold Hunt pouring across a road in pursuit of a live scent. In all of these cases, hounds were left vulnerable to road traffic, fatal injury, and distress—without proper supervision or control.

Hounds should never be on or near roads. Even during so-called “legal” trail hunting, their presence near traffic is inherently dangerous—not only to the hounds themselves but also to members of the public. These incidents lay bare the complete failure of trail hunting to provide adequate safeguards or uphold welfare standards. Instead of protecting hounds, trail hunting consistently places them at risk, while also acting as a smokescreen for illegal hunting.

On 11 February 2025, Mendip Hunt Sabs filmed hounds from the Mendip Farmers Hunt entering an active quarry site—surrounded by moving heavy machinery. One hound narrowly avoided being struck by a vehicle.

The huntsman struggled to regain control, casting serious doubt on whether any legitimate trail could have been laid through such a hazardous environment.

Just one day later, on 12 February, York Hunt Sabs captured footage of the Middleton Hunt chasing a fox across fields and into a busy farmyard. While no hounds were injured, the situation could easily have ended in tragedy—for the hounds, for the fox, or for others nearby.

This is not new. In 2022, West Midlands Hunt Saboteurs documented repeated hound-related incidents involving the Warwickshire Hunt. This lack of hound control aided in the hunt receiving a Community Protection Notice (CPN) for repeated incidents involving out-of-control hounds and road safety concerns. However, the CPN was later appealed—and controversially dropped—following a secret deal between the hunt and the police, which drew national criticism. This was a clear missed opportunity to prioritise the welfare of hounds over the interests of hunt - why was hound safety not considered under current Animal Welfare legislation?



Other hunts have also received formal warnings for serious welfare breaches. In 2024, the Albrighton and Woodland Hunt were issued a Community Protection Notice (CPN) explicitly citing a “lack of hound control” after their hounds chased and killed a deer. That same year, the Holderness Hunt reportedly received a CPN after hounds entered a private garden, frightening the resident and allegedly killing a fox. In all these cases, such incidents not only highlight the distress and suffering caused to wildlife but also reinforce the dangers hounds face when they become out of control. Far from preventing such outcomes, the practice of so-called trail laying continues to fail both the animals being hunted and the hounds themselves.

Hunts often dismiss these incidents as isolated accidents, but the alternative—that hounds are routinely allowed to stray in pursuit of a live scent—raises even more troubling questions. Reports show hounds trespassing into private gardens, nature reserves, fields with livestock, and even school grounds, bringing disruption, danger, and distress. The repeated nature of these incidents erodes any remaining credibility of trail hunting and exposes the deeply flawed management of hunting hounds by hunts.

Such chaos affects entire communities—but it is the hounds who often pay the ultimate price. In 2025, two foxhounds from the Cheshire Forest Hunt were reportedly shot at after trespassing onto a farm. One was rushed to a vet; the other tragically died from their injuries. Even when the hunt involved is considered “legitimate,” such fatal consequences expose the unacceptable risks hounds face when hunting. The widespread nature of similar reports makes clear that these are not isolated incidents, but rather part of a systemic problem embedded within hunting culture. The welfare of hounds is repeatedly compromised, revealing deep-rooted failures across the entire industry.

Time and again, hound welfare is not undermined by rare accidents, but by systemic negligence, weak enforcement, and a culture of impunity within the hunting world. Trail hunting has repeatedly failed to protect not just wildlife, but the hounds themselves—animals who are used, exposed to danger, and often abandoned when injured or no longer useful. Without fundamental reform and legal accountability, thousands more hounds will continue to be placed in unnecessary danger each season from being out of control.

FOXHOUNDS STRANDED AND ABANDONED

The widespread lack of control highlighted in the previous section doesn’t just lead to chaotic scenes and public danger—it can also frequently leave hounds themselves stranded, abandoned, and as a result at serious risk of harm. When hounds are separated from the pack or left behind after a hunt, they are often forced to navigate unfamiliar terrain alone, facing hazards such as traffic, exposure to the elements, dehydration, or injury. These incidents are not isolated or accidental but represent yet another consequence of the hunting industry’s routine failure to prioritise the welfare of the animals it relies on. Between 2022 and 2025, dozens of cases of stranded hounds were recorded during monitored hunts—figures that, when scaled nationally, point to hundreds of hounds potentially abandoned each season. Whether left behind deliberately or as a result of negligent pack management, these cases starkly expose how the systemic disregard for hound safety continues well beyond the moment a hunt ends.

STRANDED HOUNDS – HOUNDS LEFT BEHIND OR LOST, FACING THREATS LIKE DEHYDRATION, HARSH WEATHER, AND TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Season	Incidents of Stranded Hounds	Monitored Meets	% of Meets Involved	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	47	1,363*	3.45%	~412
2023-2024	67	1,239*	5.41%	~648
2024-2025	69	1,483	4.65%	~561

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

Reports of hounds being left behind frequently come from members of the public or local groups who discover these animals alone, confused, and in distress—often long after a hunt has ended. These are not rare occurrences. In fact, they have been reported even on high-profile hunt days such as Boxing Day. For example, on 26 December 2024, the Old Surrey and Burstow Hunt reportedly left a hound behind, which was later filmed running alone in the dark along a road by Brighton Hunt Saboteurs, highlighting the serious and immediate danger to the hound’s welfare. Just days later in January, North Dorset Hunt Sabs reported a separate incident involving

the Portman Hunt, where a hound had been left struggling in a deep, water-filled ditch. The welfare implications in both cases—exposure, exhaustion, and risk of injury or death—are self-evident.

Road safety remains a recurring and urgent concern in both out of control/lost hounds and stranded/abandoned hounds. Yet until the aforementioned Cheshire Hunt case, no hunt had ever been charged, despite numerous anti-hunt groups reporting such dangers to the police. In 2023, for instance, Cheshire Hunt Sabs reported three hounds left behind by the Cheshire Hunt and running



Photo by Hull Wildlife Protectors

in the road—yet no formal action followed. These failures to respond not only reflect weak enforcement, but also a shocking tolerance for neglect.

Importantly, it's not just roads that present a danger. Hunts have left hounds in clearly hazardous environments, with no hunt staff in sight. As well as the previously mentioned Portman Hunt case, monitors and sabs have reported hounds stuck in fences or entangled in hedgerows with no hunt staff or support around, like the Eggesford hunt hound found hound Devon county hunt sabs found mentioned in an above section—suggesting that these incidents could be more widespread than currently documented. These examples point to a clear overlap between welfare concerns: lack of control, abandonment, and poor supervision often occur together, compounding the risks for the hounds involved.

The physical consequences of abandonment are often accompanied by psychological distress. In September 2023, hounds from the Beaufort Hunt were photographed running loose on roads, reportedly trying to locate their pack. Cirencester Illegal Hunt Watch described the animals as visibly distressed. In a similarly appalling case, on 26 October 2023, Cheshire Monitors reported that the Wynnstay Hunt packed up and left behind a clearly injured hound—she was limping and had visible cuts on her body. Whether these hounds were left intentionally or forgotten altogether, the outcome is the same: suffering, risk, and emotional trauma. That hunts can claim to care about hounds while failing to even notice—or worse, knowingly leave—missing or injured animals, reveals a profound lack of duty, compassion and concern for their foxhounds' wellbeing. .

The psychological toll of abandonment on hounds has been documented repeatedly, exposing the emotional suffering inflicted by

hunts. In November 2023, Staffordshire Hunt Sabs filmed a hound howling in distress after being left behind during a North Shropshire Hunt meet. Almost a year earlier, on 26 November 2022, Peterborough Hunt Sabs captured similar footage of a Fitzwilliam Hunt hound howling alone after the rest of the pack had moved on. These haunting vocalisations—marked by confusion and anxiety—reflect the deep emotional distress caused by separation and abandonment, directly challenging claims that hunts prioritise the welfare of their hounds.



Photo by the Cheshire Monitors

Such suffering has also reached public attention through local media. In early 2025, a marathon runner described discovering a cold, shivering hound left behind near the summit of The Cheviot, Northumberland's highest peak. Speaking to the BBC, she said:

“I could hear the poor thing whimpering and crying, it was so cold up there it must have been freezing.”

This case not only illustrates the physical danger that abandoned hounds face exposure, exhaustion, and potential death, but also underscores the psychological trauma of being isolated and forgotten.

Together, these cases highlight how abandonment results in both emotional and physical harm to hounds. The distress observed is not incidental; it is a predictable consequence of a hunting system. Whether left behind through negligence, poor pack control, or outright disregard, the outcomes are the same—foxhounds exposed to dangerous roads, harsh weather, injury, and the distress of isolation. The physical risks are severe, but the psychological toll is equally negative, with repeated reports of hounds howling in distress. When hunts fail to retrieve their missing and lost dogs or knowingly leave hounds behind, they reveal a systemic failure to meet even the most basic standards of animal care and welfare. Abandonment is not a rare mistake—it is yet another clear indicator of the hunting industry's indifference to the wellbeing of foxhounds.



Photo by Hull Wildlife Protectors

FOXHOUNDS AND OTHER INCIDENTS

Not all welfare concerns fall neatly into the categories of abandonment, injury, or lack of control—but that does not make them any less serious. This section highlights a range of additional incidents that raise critical questions about the treatment and wellbeing of foxhounds. These include hounds seen on busy roads under ineffective supervision, being worked during extreme weather despite official warnings, and being observed consuming decaying animal remains or faeces—behaviours that may point to poor nutrition or lack of care. It also addresses standalone yet deeply troubling reports about the lives of hounds in kennels, including allegations of violence.

While these incidents vary in nature, together they represent a substantial share of all welfare breaches recorded during observed hunt meets. Between 2022 and 2025, hundreds of such cases were documented—suggesting that, when extrapolated nationally, thousands of hounds could be affected each season. These are not one-off failures; they indicate systemic issues within the hunting industry’s approach to animal care.

Although a slight decline in recorded incidents is seen in the 2024–2025 season, this may reflect improvements in report accuracy and category classification rather than any genuine reduction in welfare concerns. What remains clear is that these “other” incidents are widespread, serious, and further evidence of an industry that persistently fails to safeguard foxhounds.

Season	Other Welfare Incidents	Monitored Meets	% of Meets Involved	Estimated National Incidents
2022-2023	254	1,363*	18.63%	~2,227
2023-2024	210	1,239*	16.95%	~2,030
2024-2025	196	1,483	13.22%	~1,592

*Total meets for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 are estimates.

One of the most frequently recorded “other” welfare concerns was the presence of hounds on public roads—even when under the supervision of hunt staff. Crucially, this supervision did not prevent dangerous or distressing situations from unfolding. For example, during a Holderness Hunt meet in 2022, a hound was struck by a vehicle while hunt staff were present . In footage, the hound can be heard yelping in pain as the huntsman rushes towards the scene. On 17 February 2024, Mendip Hunt Sabs photographed a hound narrowly avoiding being hit by a car as it ran toward a red-coated hunter from the Mendip Farmers Hunt. And on 10 October 2022, West Cornwall Hunt Sabs filmed the Western Hunt moving hounds along a road, where a car travelling at the speed limit came within inches of colliding with them—despite the hounds being “under control.”

These incidents expose a critical truth: the presence of hunt staff does not eliminate risk. Roads remain a serious danger to hounds regardless of supervision, with potential outcomes including injury or death. Such examples call into question the adequacy of hunt protocols and challenge any assumption that staff presence equates to proper welfare safeguards.

Another frequently observed welfare concern was the decision by hunts to take hounds out during severe weather warnings, including red alerts and heavy fog. While this might not immediately appear to pose a welfare risk, when considered alongside other recurring issues—such as injury, hounds becoming lost or out of control, and abandonment—it becomes clear that doing so significantly increases the danger to foxhounds. The presence of fog or extreme weather further reduces visibility, hinders control, and heightens the likelihood of road accidents, exposure, and separation from the pack.

Despite these risks, hunts were repeatedly recorded operating in such conditions. Across the 2022–2025 seasons, dozens of hunt meets proceeded during red weather warnings or in heavy fog, including by some of the country’s most high-profile hunts.

HUNTS RECORDED OPERATING DURING RED WEATHER WARNINGS

2024-2025 SEASON - 12 HUNTS:

- Flint and Denbigh Hunt
- Radnor and West Hunt
- Royal Artillery Hunt
- Portman Hunt
- Beaufort Hunt
- Cottesmore Hunt
- Dartmoor Hunt
- Essex and Suffolk Hunt
- Grove and Rufford Hunt
- Kent Hounds Hunt
- South Dorset Hunt
- East Devon Hunt

2023-2024 SEASON - 4 HUNTS:

- Cattistock Hunt
- Holderness Hunt
- Beaufort Hunt
- South Nottingham Hunt

2022-2023 SEASON - 3 HUNTS:

- Flint and Denbigh Hunt
- Cotswold Hunt
- Herefordshire and Clifton Hunt
- Sinnington Hunt

HUNTS RECORDED OPERATING DURING HEAVY FOG

2024-2025 SEASON - 9 HUNTS:

- Dartmoor Hunt
- North Cotswold Hunt
- Sinnington Hunt
- Albrighton Hunt
- Seavington Hunt
- North Shropshire Hunt
- Fitzwilliam Hunt
- Derwent Hunt
- South Devon Hunt

- South Dorset Hunt
- Cattistock Hunt
- North Cornwall Hunt
- Four Burrows Hunt

2022-2023 SEASON - 8 HUNTS:

- Warwickshire Hunt
- West Percy Hunt
- Beaufort Hunt
- Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt
- Cheshire Hunt
- Herefordshire and Clifton Hunt
- North Cotswold Hunt
- South Devon Hunt

2023-2024 SEASON - 7 HUNTS:

- Belvoir Hunt
- Blackmore and Sparkford Vale Hunt
- Cottyville/South Herefordshire Hunt

These numbers likely underrepresent the true scale of the problem. Hunts were only included in this dataset when anti-hunting groups explicitly referenced the weather conditions in their reporting—meaning many more may have gone undocumented. With an estimated 12,000 hunting days taking place annually across Britain, the number of hounds subjected to these unnecessary risks could be significantly higher.

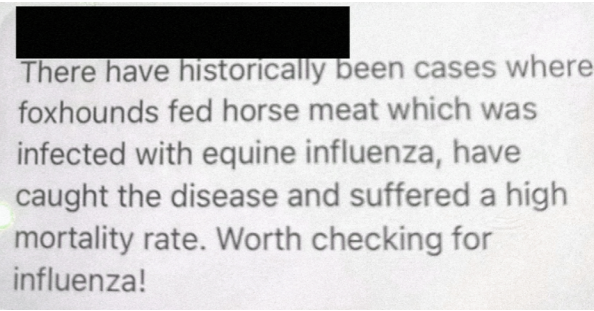
Taking hounds out in fog or during extreme weather demonstrates a worrying disregard for their wellbeing. When hunts already struggle to maintain control over packs in optimal conditions, choosing to operate in hazardous weather magnifies the risk of harm, especially given the frequency of near-misses on roads and the persistent issues of abandonment and injury. These decisions reflect yet another layer of systemic neglect within the hunting industry, where hound welfare is often sacrificed for the continuation of the day’s hunt.

Another recurring welfare concern is hounds consuming decaying animal remains during hunt meets. Multiple documented cases show hounds eating rotting carcasses—such as deer legs, dead pheasants, sheep, and rabbits. For example, in 2025, a South Dorset hound was seen eating a dead pheasant; Melbreak Foxhounds, Goathland and Glaisdale Hunt hounds were observed eating dead sheep. In 2024, a Royal Artillery Hunt hound was photographed carrying a decaying deer’s head. In 2023, a North Cotswold Hunt hound tried to eat a deer leg, Middleton Hunt hounds ate a decaying rabbit, and South Devon Hunt hounds were pictured eating a sheep carcass. While such incidents might be dismissed as opportunistic scavenging, the consequences are far from minor. The ingestion of contaminated meat can lead to serious illness, sometimes manifesting days after the hunt.



Image of a hound eating a deer leg by Three Counties Hunt Sabs

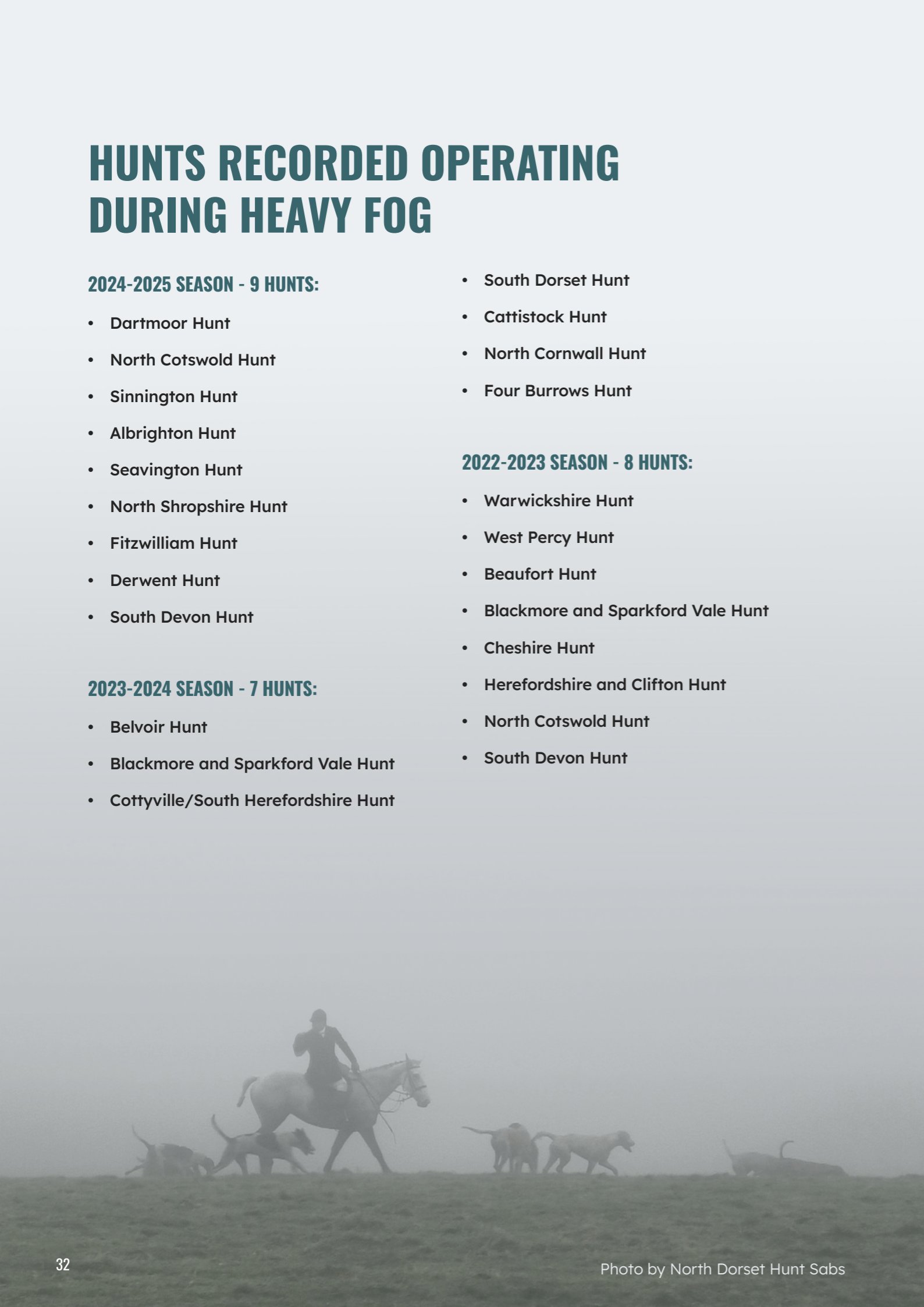
In one notable case from 2025, leaked messages reportedly revealed that hounds from the Grove and Rufford Hunt became mysteriously ill after consuming what was believed to be contaminated livestock remains. The illness spread quickly through the pack killing five hounds, raising concerns not only about exposure during the hunt but also about basic hygiene, veterinary oversight, and kennel management.



Leaked Facebook group message



Deceased Grove and Rufford hound



Discussions in the private Facebook group involving veterinary professionals included references to hounds from other hunts becoming sick—and dying—from illnesses such as botulism, equine influenza, and other preventable conditions. These conversations raise alarming questions about both the standard of care provided to foxhounds and the apparent complacency among some veterinary practitioners regarding their treatment and welfare.

Weymouth Animal Rights recently reported a particularly disturbing case involving the killing of day-old foxhound puppies using a method known as “thumping”—inflicting blunt force trauma. The puppies are then allegedly drowned in a bucket of water before their bodies are discarded. This practice was banned and is widely accepted as an ineffective and inhumane method of euthanasia.

If these reports are accurate, they raise urgent questions about oversight, enforcement, and the hunting industry’s treatment of dogs behind closed doors. Even more concerning is the possibility that potentially thousands of healthy, day-old puppies are being killed in this manner—directly violating the Animal Welfare Act and the nationwide ethical standards for the treatment of dogs in England and Wales.

These additional welfare concerns—ranging from hounds being put at risk on busy roads, hunted in hazardous weather, consuming dangerous carcasses, to the cruel killing of puppies—underscore the breadth and severity of suffering endured by foxhounds. While each incident may appear isolated, together they reveal a systemic pattern of neglect and mistreatment that is deeply embedded within the hunting industry.

The documented cases between 2022 and 2025 likely represent only a fraction of the true scale, raising serious questions about the industry’s capacity or willingness to protect the welfare of these animals.



CONCLUSION

The evidence across multiple seasons and reports exposes a systemic and deeply troubling failure by the hunting industry to safeguard the welfare of foxhounds. These animals endure frequent and severe physical harm—from entanglement in dangerous fencing and rough, often violent handling, to preventable injuries and fatalities on hazardous terrain and busy roads. Beyond visible injuries, foxhounds regularly face abandonment, loss of control, and exposure to harsh environments that compound their suffering. The scale of these incidents—from dozens documented at observed hunt meets to estimated hundreds nationwide—calls into question every claim made by hunts about the care and value they place on their hounds, who continue to suffer as unseen victims of an industry that routinely neglects their most basic welfare needs.

This pattern of neglect and abuse starkly contradicts the hunting industry’s claims of care and responsibility. Instead, it reveals a culture where cruelty is normalised, accountability is minimal, and transparency is actively avoided. The so-called “trail hunting” model, far from providing a safe or lawful alternative, often operates as a façade for live quarry hunting, putting hounds at constant risk. Even if hunts are genuinely laying trails, the lack of transparency makes it impossible to verify this, and the evidence

shows that hounds are still routinely placed in dangerous situations—demonstrating that following a legal trail does not guarantee their safety.

Crucially, the forthcoming Cheshire Hunt trial—brought under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 for allowing hounds to run dangerously out of control—represents a pivotal opportunity to enforce much-needed accountability and reform. This case highlights the urgent necessity of applying existing welfare laws rigorously to protect foxhounds and uphold public safety.

Without greater transparency, independent oversight, and robust legal enforcement, these vulnerable animals will continue to suffer behind a veil of secrecy. It is imperative that authorities act decisively to end this cycle of harm, ensuring that foxhounds are treated not as expendable tools of sport, but as sentient beings deserving of protection and compassion.

It is time for foxhounds to be truly seen—for their suffering to be acknowledged, their welfare assessed, and their protection ensured. We are a nation of dog lovers who have, for too long, have overlooked these dogs. It is time that foxhounds are no longer forgotten.

THIS REPORT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN COMPLETED WITHOUT THE DEDICATED AND TIRELESS WORK OF HUNT SABOTEUR AND MONITOR GROUPS, WHO GO OUT WEEK AFTER WEEK TO DOCUMENT WHAT IS TAKING PLACE ON THE GROUND.

Bath Hunt Saboteurs, Beds & Bucks Hunt Saboteurs, Berkshire Hunt Saboteurs, Brighton Hunt Saboteurs, Bristol Hunt Saboteurs, Calder Valley Hunt Saboteurs, Cheshire Against Blood Sports, Cheshire Animal Rights Campaigns, Cheshire Borderlands Monitors, Cheshire Hunt Saboteurs, Cirencester Illegal Hunt Watch, Cotswold Hunt Saboteurs, Cumbria Hunt Saboteurs, Derby Hunt Saboteurs, Devon County Hunt Saboteurs, Dorset Against Blood Sports, Dorset Hunt Monitors, East Herts Sabs, East Kent Hunt Saboteurs, East Northants Hunt Saboteurs, East Surrey Hunt Saboteurs, East Yorkshire Coast Hunt Saboteurs, Geordie Hunt Sabs, Grafton Hunt Watch, Guildford Hunt Saboteurs, Herefordshire Hunt Saboteurs, Hertfordshire Hunt Saboteurs, Herts Wildlife Monitors, Hull Wildlife Protectors, Hunt audits southwest, Hunt Monitors (POWA), Hunt Saboteurs NI, Kernow Sabs, Monitors and Animal Rights, Lake District Hunt Saboteurs, Lancashire Hunt Saboteurs, Lincoln Hunt Saboteurs, Liverpool Hunt Saboteurs, Locals Against the BSV Hunt, Manchester Hunt Saboteurs, Mendip Hunt Saboteurs, Newcastle Hunt Saboteurs, Norfolk and Suffolk Against Live Quarry Hunting, Norfolk/Suffolk Hunt Saboteurs, North Dorset Hunt Saboteurs, North Downs Hunt Sabs, North East Hunt Monitors, North Hampshire Hunt Sabs, North London Hunt Saboteurs, North Wales Hunt Saboteurs, Northants Hunt Saboteurs, Northumberland Hunt Watch, Norwich Hunt Saboteurs, Nottingham Hunt Saboteurs, Peterborough Hunt Sabs, Plymouth and West Devon Hunt Saboteurs, Reading Hunt Saboteurs, Roaming Sabs, Salisbury Plain Hunt Sabs, Sheffield Hunt Saboteurs, Shropshire Hunt Sabs, Shropshire Monitors, Shropshire Wildlife Monitors, Somerset Sabs, South Cambs Hunt Saboteurs, South Coast Hunt Saboteurs, South Devon Animal Rights, South Devon Hunt Saboteurs, South Hampshire Hunt Saboteurs, South Norfolk Hunt Saboteurs, South Suffolk Hunt Saboteurs, South Thames Hunt Sabs, South Ulster Hunt Sabs, South Wales Hunt Saboteurs, South West Animal Rights Movement, Staffordshire Hunt Saboteurs, Stop Hunting on the Nation's Land, Suffolk Action for Wildlife, Suffolk and Essex Hunt Saboteurs, Surrey Hunt Monitors, Surrey Hunt Sabs, Teesside Anti Blood Sports, The Wight Hunt Sabs, Three Counties Hunt Saboteurs, Two Counties Hunt Saboteurs, Welsh Border Hunt Saboteurs, Welsh Border Hunt Saboteurs South, Welsh Border Wildlife Protectors, West Cornwall Hunt Saboteurs, West Cornwall Hunt Sabs Penwith Monitoring, West Kent Hunt Saboteurs, West Midlands Hunt Saboteurs, West Sussex Hunt Saboteurs, West Yorkshire Hunt Saboteurs, Weymouth Animal Rights, Wildlife Crime Action, Wildlife Guardian, Wiltshire Hunt Saboteurs, York Anti-Hunt League, York Hunt Sabs.