

## **Rocky Fork Headley Hunt Hunting Etiquette**

These rules of conduct have been prescribed by the Board of Trustees of the Rocky Fork Headley Hunt to promote the enjoyment and safety of hounds, riders and mounts. Although foxhunting practices and protocol may have changed slightly over the years, foxhunting clubs throughout the world still share many common practices that are deeply entrenched in tradition.

### **Punctuality and politeness**

Foxhunting is considered old-world by many these days, but one of the features we most treasure is the emphasis on sportsmanship and good manners. Toward that end, all riders are expected to be groomed, tidy and mounted at least 15 minutes in advance of the hunt start time, at which time announcements will be made.

The traditional greeting for a Master is “good morning,” whatever the time of day. Courtesy in the hunt field is valued; each year one Rocky Fork member is presented with an award for the Most Courteous Rider and one horse is presented with Best Behaved Field Hunter.

**Announcements:** At the beginning of the meet, the Huntsman will blow his or her horn. Please collect quickly and quietly. This is an important time for announcements about the Hunt activities and conditions. When announcements are made, cease conversation and listen. These may concern safety or success in the conduct of the Hunt.

### **Tack and Horses**

**Tack:** Tack should be plain and serviceable. Avoid colored brow bands and tack. Rubber reins must be brown. Saddle pads should be contoured and white; square jumper pads, usually with RFHH logo, are reserved for staff. Use biting suitable to control your horse; under the exciting conditions of hunting, control is essential.

**Horse:** Foxhunting is a demanding and exciting endeavor; your horse needs to be fit and under control in the hunt field. Be sure your horse is ready. If your horse kicks, put a red ribbon in its tail and ride at the end of your field. If your horse is new to the sport, put a green ribbon in its tail and ride at the end of your field.

**Braiding Manes:** It is correct to braid manes for formal days such as the Blessing of the Hounds. If a horse's mane is braided, it should be done neatly. A net-style braid along the neck is not acceptable. An unbraided mane that is nicely trimmed is preferable to a poorly done braiding job.

## **Riding Attire**

Foxhunting is rigidly conventional. Attention is given to attire out of respect for tradition, safety, comfort and practicality. Foxhunting attire varies according to gender, seniority and cub hunting, or informal, versus formal season. At Rocky Fork Headley Hunt, the following attire is acceptable, although the Masters always have the authority to insist on whatever degree of formality or informality of dress suits the territory and climate.

**Cub Hunting.** Cub hunting at Rocky Fork Headley Hunt runs generally from mid-August until the Blessing of the Hounds, the first Saturday in November. Ratcatcher is the term applied to the least formal attire permitted in the Field, to be worn during cub hunting. The attire is basically the same for both sexes. This attire may also be worn by Juniors during the formal season, with prior permission of the Master(s).

**Shirt:** Acceptable attire includes a riding shirt (ratcatcher), in subdued color, with neckband or stock tie and stock pin for ladies; a man's shirt with necktie, plain polo shirt, or turtleneck in subdued color, tucked in, for either gender.

**Stock:** For ladies, a ratcatcher shirt may be worn with a stock tie in a conservative or coordinating color, neatly tied and fastened with a stock pin, with ends pinned down to remain tidy, and vest or hacking jacket. White stock ties are not correct in informal season.

**Vest:** A canary or tattersall vest is optional.

**Coat:** A hacking jacket in linen or wool tweed in muted colors (no red), tailored and vented, is appropriate. In warm weather, coats may be omitted.

**Headgear:** A black or brown velvet hunting cap is required, and the Masters of the RFHH strongly recommend a hunting cap with harness. Juniors must wear an ASTM-approved safety helmet.

**Breeches:** Any earthtone color of breeches or jodhpurs-buff, tan, gray, or rust-is allowed.

**Boots:** Boots must be clean and polished. They may be either brown or black leather dress or field boots. Half chaps are not allowed. Formal boots with brown or patent-leather tops are not appropriate. Rubber boots are acceptable, as are canvas-topped (Newmarket) boots, and Jodhpur boots worn with Jodhpur pants.

**Hunt Whip:** A regulation hunting whip is optional for those with colors. Thong and lash may be removed during cub hunting. A short, plain-colored riding crop is also optional.

**Rain Gear:** Unless specified on the RFHH hotline, sport goes forth even in precipitation. On such days, the Masters may choose to allow hunting coats to be replaced by rain jackets. If so, the jacket should be a Barbour, or similar style, preferably in a black, tan, green or brown color, either with interior leg straps or loose pieces secured so that they do not flap in the wind. When visiting another Hunt, ask your host what is proper.

**Belt, Spurs, Gloves, Raincoat, Hairnet, Wire Cutters:** Same as for Formal Hunting.

**Formal Hunting.** Formal Hunt season opens with the Blessing of the Hounds on the first Saturday in November. From the Blessing until the end of the season, formal Hunt attire is required.

**Coat:** Gentlemen who have not been awarded colors must wear a plain black hunting coat or frock coat. Lady members without colors must wear a plain hunting coat or frock coat, preferably in black, but navy and dark grey are also permitted. For field members the coats must have three plain black or navy (to match the coat) front buttons; only the huntsman and masters may have coats with four or five buttons. Frock coats (which have a seam at the waist) have two additional buttons on the back. Remember to keep your coat buttoned at all times.

**Colors:** Ladies awarded colors add purple facing and light-blue piping to coat collars, referred to as the "Hunt Collar," and buttons are changed to black engraved RFHH buttons. Gentlemen awarded colors and lady Masters may wear scarlet frock coats with the Hunt Collar and brass buttons. A black, charcoal or dark navy blue shadbelly may also be worn, with the Hunt Collar and black buttons with the hunt's emblem, and is suitable for formal days such as Opening Meet and Blessing of the Hounds. It is not appropriate to wear colors while visiting another Hunt without prior approval from that Hunt's MFH.

**Vest:** Vests should be canary or tattersall.

**Shirt and Stock:** When coats are waived during formal season, riders must wear long-sleeved white riding shirts. A white or cream stock tie is required for formal hunting. Find an experienced Hunt member to teach you how to tie it.

**Headgear:** A black velvet hunting cap is required, and the Masters of the RFHH strongly recommend a hunting cap with harness. Juniors must wear an ASTM-approved safety helmet.

**Breeches:** Gentlemen without colors wear tan and lady members wear tan or canary breeches. Gentlemen with colors and lady Masters must wear white breeches with scarlet coats.

**Belt:** A belt is recommended, as it can be used as equipment in an emergency, i.e., a broken stirrup or as a sling.

**Boots:** Boots must be clean and polished. Fieldboots are not acceptable in formal season. Plain black boots without tops should be worn with black hunting coats. Lady members with colors wearing frock coats have the option of adding black patent leather tops (sewn on). Gentlemen with colors and Lady Masters wearing frock coats (black or scarlet) may add russet leather tops to their boots (sewn on). Rubber boots are acceptable, especially in wet weather.

**Spurs:** Spurs are optional. They must be heavy and blunt, without rowels or chains and set high on the boot below the ankle. The straps must be the same color as the boots.

**Gloves:** Gloves are optional. These should be brown, tan or black leather; white wool or cotton string gloves are allowed.

**Stock Pin:** Plain gold stock pins, with or without the RFHH logo, are appropriate. Ladies may alternatively wear the ornamental variety.

**Hunt Whip:** A regulation hunting whip is optional for those with colors. A short, plain-colored riding crop is also optional.

**Rain Gear:** Unless specified on the RFHH hotline, sport goes forth even in precipitation. On such days, the Masters may choose to allow hunting coats to be replaced by rain jackets. If so, the jacket should be a Barbour, or similar style, preferably in a black, tan, green or brown color, either with interior leg straps or loose pieces secured so that they do not flap in the wind. When visiting another Hunt, ask your host what is proper.

**Belt, Spurs, Gloves, Raincoat, Hairnet, Wire Cutters:** Same as for Formal Hunting.

**Hair Net:** Unless your hair is very short, it should be neatly confined. Hairnets are advisable and correct.

**Flask and Sandwich Case:** A pocket flask is optional; alternatively, gentlemen may carry a flask or sandwich case (or both) attached to the saddle, and lady members may carry either a sandwich case or a combination flask and sandwich case attached to the saddle. (Be prepared to share.)

**Wire Cutters:** Wire cutters carried in a leather case attached to the saddle are optional.

## **The Fox**

The fox is the single most important element in our sport. He is unquestionably a sportsman, and we strive to honor his sense of craft and to protect his dignity for another day of shared sport. The fox seems to glory in the chase, and when the game is over, he simply goes to ground. There are red and gray foxes, but the red fox is the most often seen in central Ohio. The red fox also provides better sport, as he runs in large circles that challenge the hounds while staying in the country. The best way to learn about the fox's habits is to talk to experienced foxhunters - everyone has a story.

## **The Foxhounds**

The foxhound is referred to as a hound, never a dog. The hounds are first in importance to the Hunt, and their use distinguishes foxhunting from all other equestrian sports. The hounds of Rocky Fork Headley Hunt are foxhounds, bred to hunt in a pack, using their keen sense of smell to follow the scent of fox and coyote. Of the pack foxhounds, there are different strains: Penn-Mary-Del, American, English, and the crossbred. Each Hunt breeds for the traits that best suit their needs and their country.

Some desirable qualities in a hound are nose, cry, drive, steadiness, bidability, and conformation. The training of young entry begins at three weeks: as time progresses, through handling, they learn obedience to the horn, and familiarity with horses and country. Ultimately, they learn from the older, experienced hounds in the pack, which are the best schoolmasters in the Field. The hounds work very hard and have the complete right of way. Look for them to put their noses down and begin to work the line (scent). The more you observe their efforts, the more you can appreciate their talent and training, and the more enjoyable the art of foxhunting will become.

## **Staff**

**The Master/Joint Masters:** The Masters of Foxhounds have final authority in all matters of hunting. They must approve all issues related to hunting. The Masters are responsible for kennels and the hounds. This includes supervision of the Kennelman on all matters relating to the hounds.

**The Huntsman:** Hounds are walked, trained and hunted by the Huntsman. While hunting, the Huntsman directs the course of the hunt and the hounds with the use of his/her horn and voice. Members of the field are prohibited from addressing the hounds and discouraged from talking in the hunt field in order to allow the Huntsman and hounds to communicate effectively.

**The Whippers-in:** The Whippers-in are the Huntsman's assistants on hunting and hound-walking days. The Whippers-in assist the Huntsman by moving hounds back to the Huntsman should the hounds stray. They are the Huntsman's eyes and ears and help control the hounds. They monitor game movement for the Huntsman. Whippers-in are known as honorary when they are volunteers.

**The Fieldmaster(s):** The Fieldmaster(s) are appointed by the Master(s) to lead the Field. Each Fieldmaster is responsible for showing sport to his/her Field and is the liaison between the Huntsman and the Field. He/she also has to make sure that the Field does not interfere with the hounds. There are currently three Fieldmasters. The First Field moves directly behind the Huntsman at varying rates of speed, over and through all obstacles. The Second Field follows behind the First Field, going around jumps, when possible; this Field attempts to keep up with the First Field and Huntsman. The Third Field (Hilltoppers) consists of a slower-moving group, led by the Third Fieldmaster, who proceeds at a much more modest pace to "view" the activities of the hounds, Huntsman and First and Second Fields.

*"Although hounds and staff provide the sport of Foxhunting, it is the Fieldmaster who enables those who follow to enjoy it."-Alexander Mackay-Smith*

**The Kennelman:** The Kennelman maintains the kennels and is responsible for the health and well being of the hounds. He transports the hounds to and from the meets.

**Hounds:** Hounds have the right of way. Keep away from the hounds and turn your horse's head (never heels) toward the pack. Ride wide of hounds and not behind or alongside. If riding before hounds, turn out of track and let them pass. Do not rate, whip, or speak harshly to a hound unless directed by the Huntsman.

### **Riding Rules**

**Making Way:** As the hounds work, Whippers-in will be busy. When you hear "Make Way," it means a staff member is trying to get by or the Field is about to reverse. Turn your horse's head toward the staff person and back out of the way. Nothing is more frightening or difficult for a staff person than to face the rear of a group of unknown horses.

**Moving Off.** When the Fieldmaster gives the signal to move off, it is important to follow him or her immediately, as it is disruptive to have gaps in the field.

**Riding Order.** Intermediate and Junior members are to ride behind Senior members, unless invited to ride up front by the Fieldmaster. Older members and those with their colors should be given priority. (See chart below.)

**Safe Interval.** Maintain a safe interval between your horse and other riders. Do not tailgate the horse in front of yours or leave a gap of two or more lengths, as it causes disruption in the field.

**Field.** Always obey the Fieldmaster. Never get ahead of the Fieldmaster. If the Fieldmaster does not jump a fence, you should not jump the fence. He or she alone is able to judge the safety of a fence.

**At the Jumps.** Be especially careful about spacing at jumps. You need to give yourself room to stop in case there is a problem or a hound is in front of you. If your horse refuses a jump, it is preferable to take him to the back of the jumpers. However, as Rocky Fork's country has a lot of tight places, it is not always possible to safely take your horse to the back. If there isn't room, go carefully around the jump and catch up. It is improper to school your horse over jumps while hunting.

**Riding the Line.** On a narrow trail maintain a single line. It is impolite and dangerous to pass at a gallop. Please ask permission to pass a fellow rider. Always pass at a collected pace.

**Keep Talk To Minimum.** One of the pleasures of foxhunting is listening to the hounds work: the whimper of a hound when he first gets the slight scent of a fox and calls the other hounds to him to verify his find; the music the pack makes when it opens and gives voice as one. In addition to allowing the Huntsman to track the hounds, it is important for riders to keep quiet so that all may enjoy the music and not distract the hounds. Hacking home is the best time for conversation.

**Uncontrollable Horse.** Do not school your horse during a Hunt. If you are not in control of your horse, excuse yourself by notifying the Fieldmaster, and take your horse home, following the directions of the Fieldmaster. The Hunt Field is not a safe or appropriate place to school your horse.

**Kicking Horse.** A horse that kicks must have a red ribbon tied to its tail. If you feel a kick brewing, place one hand in the small of your back and call out "ware hoof." Other riders should avoid riding close to any horse wearing the red ribbon.

**Danger Warnings.** Warn other riders of any dangers in the terrain such as holes, wire, glass, etc., by saying "ware."

**No Smoking.** There is no smoking in the Hunt Field.

**Cell Phones.** The use of cell phones is prohibited, except by staff members in an emergency.

**Leaving the Field.** The Field is counted at the beginning of the Hunt in order to keep track of everyone. Please do not leave the Field without letting the Fieldmaster know. It is proper etiquette to ask his permission to leave the Field. The reason for

asking permission is not only safety, but also because you may foul the line (scent) if you leave at the wrong moment. The Fieldmaster has the best sense of where the Huntsman is headed.

### **If you view a fox**

1) Point in the direction of the fox. (Keep an eye on where he is going). The universal signal that a fox has been viewed is to stand still, facing the line, hold your hat in the air, and point with it in the direction of the line.

2) If you do not see the Huntsman or know where he is, shout "Tally Ho!"

3) If there is no staff person in the area, try to remember where you last viewed the fox and notify the Fieldmaster.

### **Landowner Rules**

The sport of foxhunting requires suitable land in large quantities. Such land is not easy to find and can be lost to hunting by acts of carelessness or ignorance. Our first set of rules advocates courteous and responsible behavior to landowners. Hunt country is private property. Riding on non-hunt days must be done with prior permission of the landowner.

**Gates:** Leave gates as they are found. If the Field is spread out, riders are responsible to pass the word to followers to "close (or lock) the gate" or "leave it open" before continuing. When in doubt, the last rider should close the gate and report the action to the Fieldmaster or a staff member.

**Cultivated Ground:** Do not ride over plowed or planted ground; this includes hay fields. If the landowner has provided bridle paths on the edges of his fields, ride only on these paths. Most farmers now use the no-till method of farming. This means that they don't plow their fields in the spring but plant their seeds with no obvious preparation of the ground. Hoof prints in the soil interfere with the proper functioning of the special planting machine and thus reduce the harvest. To lessen the damage horses do to cultivated fields, we must ride at all times on the extreme outer edge and in single file. In areas that are not cultivated but allowed to grow in heavy turf, riders should spread out and not ride in file so as not to make paths. This also gives the Field a better view of the hounds. The Fieldmaster will signal when the Field should spread out.

**Livestock:** Ride slowly and avoid livestock. If livestock break through a fence or go through a gate opened by the Hunt, return them where they belong. If unable to do so, report to the Fieldmaster or staff.

**Equipment on Location:** Ask permission before using any equipment such as hoses and water faucets to wash horses. Avoid creating a muddy area.

**Trash:** Clean up trash and manure. Police the area around trailer parking space.

**Appreciation:** If the landowner or his/her representative is present, you are encouraged to express your individual thanks and appreciation.

**Trailers:** Park so that you allow enough space to unload and tie horses safely. Be aware of parking conditions.

### **The Awarding of Colors**

The privilege of wearing the colors and buttons of the Hunt is awarded at the discretion of the Masters. This honor is based upon a rider's ability, attitude, and knowledge of the Hunt country. Colors are awarded at the Annual Meeting at the discretion of the Masters. There are many factors included in their decision: volunteer hours; support and participation in Hunt events; manners; etiquette; horsemanship; knowledge and respect of the sport, country and fellow foxhunters; and finally, being a regular Subscribing member for two or more years.

### **Guests in the Field**

Members are encouraged to have guests in the Field; however, the member must have permission of a Master of Foxhounds, and the guest must be properly attired. Also, the guest must be accompanied by his/her sponsor and should remain in the rear of the Field unless personally invited by the Fieldmaster to come forward. Those guests who wear the colors of another Hunt may sport their colors only with the permission of a RFHH Master of Foxhounds. Guests are not to be invited to special events without receiving a personal invitation by the host or hostess. Guests are required to hunt three times before they may apply for a hunting membership.

### **New Members**

There must be two Subscribing sponsors for each applicant for membership in the Rocky Fork Headley Hunt. Both sponsors must write a letter of recommendation to the Membership Chair, and all applicants must attend at least one Hunt social function; hunting members, in addition, must attend three hunts, prior to installation. New members will be taken in on a quarterly basis or upon the next meeting of the Board of Trustees, whichever occurs first. Sponsors are responsible for the introduction and education of the members they sponsor, and must accompany the person they're sponsoring in the Hunt field.

### **Social Activities**

The fellowship of foxhunting extends beyond the Hunt Field through various social and riding activities planned by the Hunt members and the Social Committee. Members are encouraged to participate.

**Hunt Breakfast:** These occur during the cub hunting season, after the ride. They are given by one or more members for riders of the day.

**The Blessing:** This marks the opening of the formal Hunt season. The hounds and riders are blessed, and after the Hunt there is a formal breakfast. Guests are welcome.

**Stirrup Cup:** This is a mounted libation served at events such as the Blessing, Boxing Day, or any special occasion.

**Hunt Tea:** This is a gathering after the Hunt (during formal Hunt season) for refreshments and an opportunity to share the events of the day with your fellow foxhunters. (Hunt jackets should be replaced by tweeds, spurs should be removed and boots should be cleaned.) Members are expected to participate in the giving of one or more Hunt Teas by signing up with the Social Committee.

**Hunt Supper:** An evening event, given during the season and hosted by members. Riders of the day are encouraged to wear hunt attire. (Hunt jackets should be replaced by tweeds, spurs should be removed and boots should be cleaned.) For non-riders, ties and sport coats are appropriate. Invitations are extended to members, spouses/partners, and dates only. Guests should be included only if invited by the host.

**Hunter Pace, Hunter Trials and Trail Rides:** These are riding events that generally include food and fun.

**Trail Clearing:** This is a work party comprised of members who keep the hunt trails safe and free of hazards to horse and rider.

**Hunt Ball:** The Hunt Ball is a formal event for members and guests.

### **Foxhunting Terms**

**Babbler:** A hound that gives tongue (speaks) simply from excitement, without regard for the line (scent).

**Billets:** Fox manure.

**Break Covert:** A fox breaks covert (cover) when he runs out of it.

**Breast High:** Scent is said to be breast high when it rises to the level of the hounds' noses so they can hunt at top speed.

**Brush:** The fox's tail.

**Capping Fee:** The amount paid by visitors (prior to the hunt) for the privilege of a day's hunting. (In the early days visitors paid the fee in silver and dropped it in the cap of the Hunt secretary.)

**Colors:** A collar of definite color registered for a particular Hunt.

**Country:** The area assigned to a Hunt.

**Couple:** Foxhounds are coupled together (attached by leather collars) by twos. Foxhounds are always counted by twos known as a couple.

**Covert:** (Pronounced "cover") An area, usually wooded, which provides protection for animals.

**Cry:** The voice of a foxhound pursuing quarry is called a cry or giving tongue. Full cry occurs when every hound in the pack cries on the line of a fox.

**Cub Hunting:** The weeks preceding the beginning of formal foxhunting are known as the cub hunting season. It is technically incorrect to refer to this as Cubbing Season, although the expression is widely used.

**Cub:** A young fox.

**Cur Dog:** Any dog, other than a foxhound, is known as a cur dog by foxhunters.

**Draw:** The Huntsman and hounds are said to "draw a covert" when they search every part of the covert for a fox.

**Field:** Those who follow foxhounds on horseback, other than the Hunt staff, are known as the Field. They are usually led by a Fieldmaster.

**Fixture Card:** Lists the dates, times, and places where hounds and riders will meet during the ensuing month.

**Foil:** When a fox doubles back on his line, he is said to "run his foil." Ground is foiled when it bears some scent (sheep, cattle, etc.) besides that of a fox.

**Go To Ground:** A fox "goes to ground" when it takes refuge in a hole.

**Gone Away:** The call "gone away" indicates the fox has left the covert.

**Guests:** Guests are encouraged, but they must have permission from a Master, must be properly attired and accompanied by a member of the Hunt.

**Hark:** A command used by the Huntsman to encourage hounds to listen.

**Hit the Line:** A hound hits the line when he finds the line (scent) and gives tongue.

**Hold Hard:** Stop, please!

**Holloa:** Pronounced “Holler.” The high-pitched call of someone such as the first Whipper-in who views (sees) a fox breaking covert.

**Huntsman:** The Huntsman is in charge of and directs the hounds on hunting days. When the Master or an amateur hunts hounds, he or she is known as the Honorary Huntsman.

**Lark:** To “lark” is to jump fences when hounds are not hunting or when on the way home after hunting.

**Make Way:** If the Huntsman wants to warn the Field of the approach of hounds, he or she will say “hounds please,” “Huntsman please,” or “make way.”

**Mask:** The head of a fox.

**Meet:** The place where hounds, horse, staff, and Field gather to begin hunting.

**Over Ride:** To ride too close to the hounds.

**Pocket:** A member of the Field is guilty of riding “in the Huntsman’s pocket” when he continually gets so close as to interfere with hunting the hounds.

**Ratcatcher:** A term used to designate the informal clothes worn during the cub hunting season.

**Rate:** To rate a hound is to scold him.

**Riot:** When hounds hunt forbidden quarry (example: a deer).

**Scent:** The odor emitted from glands of animals that is left on the ground, thus leaving a trail (line) which can be followed, i.e., fox by foxhounds.

**Staff:** The Hunt staff consists of the Master or Joint Masters, the Huntsman, the Whippers-In, and the Fieldmasters. The Rocky Fork Headley Hunt is all volunteer.

**Tally Ho:** A call indicating the fox has been viewed.

**Tongue:** A hound is said to give tongue or to throw its tongue when it draws the first covert.

**View:** A fox is “viewed,” rather than “seen.”

**View a Loo:** Another way of saying “tally ho.”

**Ware:** This means beware of holes or wire, etc.

**Whippers-In:** The Huntsman’s assistants. If the Whipper-In is an amateur, he or she is called an Honorary Whipper-In.

## **Order of the Field**

**Huntsman**

**Honorary Whippers-in**

### **Fieldmaster (1st Field)**

Senior Jumpers with Colors  
Intermediate / Junior Jumpers with Colors  
Jumpers without Colors

### **Fieldmaster (2nd Field)**

Senior Non-Jumpers with Colors  
Intermediate / Junior Non-Jumpers with Colors  
Non-Jumpers without Colors

### **Fieldmaster (3rd Field)**

Hilltoppers

The Fieldmaster may change the order at his or her discretion. Senior Members are designated by their longevity in the Hunt. Horses that kick should wear a red ribbon in their tails and ride in the rear of their field; green horses should wear a green ribbon in their tails and ride at the rear of their field. Riders having difficulty with their horses should stay at the rear or go home.