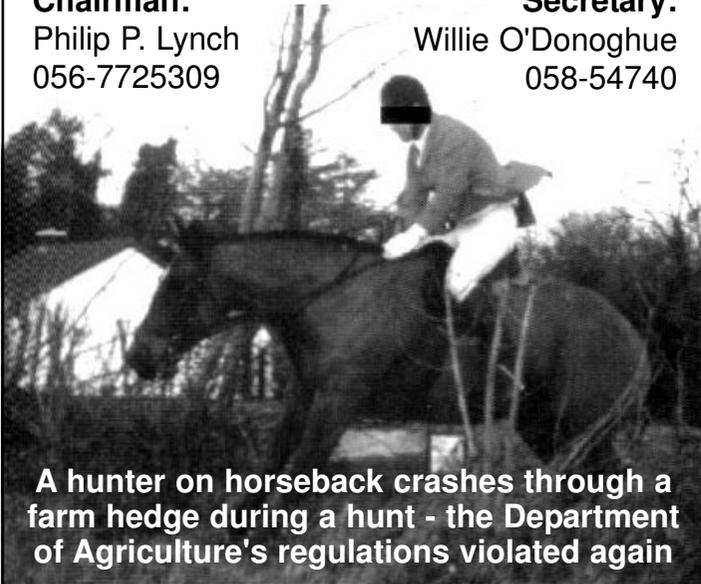


FARMERS AGAINST FOXHUNTING & TRESPASS



Chairman:
Philip P. Lynch
056-7725309

Secretary:
Willie O'Donoghue
058-54740



A hunter on horseback crashes through a farm hedge during a hunt - the Department of Agriculture's regulations violated again

The Farmers Against Foxhunting and Trespass group (FAFT) was formed during the summer of 2003, after fox hunting clubs caused extensive damage to farmers' land and livestock throughout the country.

These very serious offences were inflicted on farmers who had published Hunt Ban notices in the local papers. They had also notified the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) and the hunters themselves that their lands were off-limits to hunting.

In taking this action, the farmers involved were honouring both the spirit and the letter of the IFA's Country Code. The farmers' appeal fell on deaf ears.

Within a few weeks of its formation, FAFT came to represent farmers in ten counties. Our aim is to stop the appalling criminal damage and trespass by lobbying TDs and Senators to ban fox hunting in this country in line with Scotland and the UK. If such legislation is not enacted immediately, Ireland will become the Hunt Pit of Europe, and Irish farmers the victim of wholesale rural vandalism.

The hunt clubs make money and enjoy sport at the farmers' expense. To the farmers of Ireland we say, in fairness and justice:

BE ACTIVE IN YOUR SUPPORT FOR YOUR FELLOW FARMER AND THE FAFT ORGANISATION!

Now, more than ever, it is important for farmers to keep their lands free of disease. The ever-present threat of foot and mouth and BSE, for example, has threatened the economic survival of farming on this island. But there are many other diseases that constitute a threat to animal farming and that is why the watchword is **bio-security and traceability.**

This means adopting a set of measures to maintain the health status of all stock on the farm. This status can be compromised in three ways: by people, vehicles, and certain other animals coming on to land.

During a typical mounted hunt, anything up to 40 hounds go from farm to farm without regard to the disease status of the land they cross. As one hunt master put it: "We go where the fox goes". In a typical day's hunt, it is reckoned that a hunt crosses up to 30 farm boundaries.



Boundary wall damaged by fox hunting - more work and liability for the farmer.

Both mounted hunts and foot packs threaten bio-security. Diseases can be carried long distances on the clothing and footwear of hunt members, on the hooves of horses and also by hunt vehicles and fox hounds.

Farmers are obliged to **pay millions in levies** to control diseases, yet the hunts are free to introduce outsiders to fields and farms to **SPREAD DISEASE.** This was a big risk in the UK during the Foot and Mouth Disease.

It is against Department regulations to hunt over TB- and BSE-restricted holdings. **BUT NO ONE TOLD THE FOX!**

Hounds are known to be carriers of infectious parasites that can prove fatal if passed on to livestock.

Poaching of land

Ireland's cereal crops can be severely damaged by hunts - this includes our most valuable crop - grass.

With up to 60 horses riding across land, it is not surprising that the poaching of land during the hunting season has become such a problem for farmers. Poaching not only has an impact on land but it also leads to grass growth being retarded by more than 70 per cent the following spring. Hunters claim that they repair any damage they do to property. Another fairy story. Most foxhunting clubs do not have insurance cover either.

Hunting takes place during the winter months when land is at its wettest and most vulnerable to poaching. So whenever hunting takes place, poaching is sure to occur. The Fluke Snail thrives on poached land, causing more losses and increased dosing costs to farmers.

The hunters don't appear to have a problem with leaving a wake of destruction in their path. One hunter was quoted as follows in the Sunday Independent: "Farmers generously let us gallop like cavalries over their rain sodden and flooded fields. We plough them up, leaving them looking like venues of epic battles."

Farmer! Have you been a victim?

The Department of Agriculture's Code of Good Farming Practice states that severe poaching of land is prohibited and can result in penalties. This applied to all farmers - not just those who are part of a REPS scheme.

Foxes - are they a pest?

The idea of the fox as a major agricultural pest is untrue. The hunters use this to claim to convince

farmers that the hunt is carrying out a vital service. The hunt often release foxes to chase if there's none in the area.

The truth is that hunting with hounds has nothing to do with pest control. It is merely **a pastime carried out at the expense of the farmer and free of charge to the hunt**, leaving the farmer with terrified and maimed livestock. Then the hunt will blame the fox. *Oh, he went your way.*

Reasons to keep the hunt away

As well as the threat of disease spread associated with hunts, there are a host of other reasons to make your land off-limits to hunts. A field being used to keep livestock in can become unsuitable when a hunt, ploughing through hedges and fences, leaves openings for livestock to wander out (hunts seem to delight in cutting wire fences). Both the Department of Agriculture and REPS demand that boundary fences be stock-proof.

There is also the question of liability to the farmer if an accident occurs during a hunt. Hunt hounds and the sudden presence of hunters on horseback can also worry livestock. This can result in, for example, pregnant animals having miscarriages.

Farm animals have also been chased to their deaths into ditches and ponds by packs of hunt



hounds. Foxhounds are trained killers and records show that they not only attack foxes but also live-stock and domestic pets.

FAFT appeal to farmers:

Do you ride with the hunt? If so, are you not ashamed of the damage you cause to your fellow farmer's land, fences and livelihood? You are putting him down like the English landlords of old. Remember He is the man who supported you at IFA and farming demonstrations, who defended your rights and took a stand to improve your income. And you treat him like this? Farmers do not want you on their land. STAY OFF.

Why not be a better neighbour? Use a drag hunt on your own land and we can all enjoy the sport. Then the days of cruelty, dread and worry for the farmer will be over.



Farmers - could this loss be yours?

For more advice and info, contact FAFT Chairman, Philip Lynch, on 056-7725309
For updates, check out our MySpace page:
www.myspace.com/farmersagainstfoxhunting
Subscriptions and donations welcome.
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