

Hunting Terminology

A Beginner's Guide to the Language of Hunting

Hunting has developed a unique language over centuries of tradition. While some terms describe the work of the hounds, others relate to the people, customs, and etiquette that make hunting distinctive. This guide introduces many of the words and phrases commonly heard in the hunting field and at the kennels.

THE HOUNDS

All On

All hounds are present.

Babbler

A hound that speaks to a nonexistent line out of sheer excitement.

Biddable

A hound that is particularly responsive, easy to train and will take direction.

Bike

A term used to call hounds back when they get too far in front of the huntsman.

Bitch

A female hound.

Couples

Two-strap hound collars connected by a swivel link. Hounds are always spoken of and counted in couples.

Cry

The voice of hounds 'giving tongue' to the line of game.

Dog Hound

The male hound.

Enter

Hounds are entered into the pack when they first hunt, usually during cubbing season.

Full Cry

When the entire pack is speaking on the line of the game.

Give Tongue

When hounds speak to the line of the game.

Honour

When hounds respect another hound's find and rush to its assistance.

Nose

The scenting ability of a hound.

Overrun

When hounds shoot past the line of a scent.

Strike Hound

Those hounds that find scent first and press it.

Tail Hound

Those hounds running at the rear of the pack.

Walk

Volunteer walkers take puppies home before formal kennel training.

Whelp

A puppy; also the act of giving birth.

THE QUARRY

Brush

The tail of the fox or coyote.

Cub

Young fox or coyote.

Dog Fox

The male fox or coyote.

Earth

Underground holes or dens where foxes or coyotes lie for protection.

Mask

The coyote or fox's head.

Vixen

The female fox or coyote.

SCENT & HUNTING

Burning Scent

Scent so strong that hounds pursue the line without hesitation.

Cast

When hounds spread out in search of scent.

Check

When hounds lose the scent and stop.

Coursing

Following game by sight rather than scent.

Drag

The scent trail left behind by quarry.

Draw

Searching an area for game.

Gone Away

When game leaves the covert and hounds are running on the line.

Gone to Ground

When game has taken refuge in a den or hiding place.

Hunting Heel

When hounds hunt the line in the opposite direction.

Lift

Taking hounds from a lost scent in hopes of finding a better one.

Line

The scent trail of the coyote or fox.

Riot

When hounds chase game they should not.

PEOPLE, FIELD & TRADITIONS

Cap

The fee nonmembers and visitors pay to hunt for a day. Originally dropped into the outstretched cap of the Field Secretary.

Coffee House

When members chatter rather than pay attention to hounds. If you can hear the huntsman, he and the hounds can hear you.

Colours

The distinguishing colour that identifies a hunt.

Field

The group of riders following the hounds.

Field Master

The person appointed by the Master to control the field.

Fixture

A card stating when and where the hounds will meet.

Good Night

The traditional farewell to the Master after the hunt, regardless of the time of day.

Headlands Please

A request to stay to the edge of fields and off crops.

Hilltopper

A rider who follows the hunt but does not jump.

Hireling

A rented horse for hunting.

Hold Hard

Stop immediately.

Huntsman

The person in charge of the hounds in the field and kennel.

Huntsman Please

Staff always has the right of way. Riders should allow them to pass safely.

Lark

To jump fences unnecessarily when hounds aren't running.

Livery

The uniform worn by professional and honorary hunt staff.

Meet

The site where the day's hunting begins.

MFH

Master of Foxhounds.

Override

To press hounds too closely.

Pinks

Traditional scarlet hunting coats.

Ratcatcher

Informal dress worn during cubbing or spring season.

Tally-Ho

The cry used when game is viewed.

Tally-Ho Back

Used when quarry is viewed going back into covert.

Ware

A warning of a hazard ahead.

Whippers-In

Staff members who assist the huntsman.