

HUNTING MANUAL



Skycastle French Hounds
Downingtown, Pennsylvania



Our Hounds and the Cottontail



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I

The Skycastle Hunt Staff is made up of the Master of the Pack, who is elected to this post by the Hunt Committee for a term of two years, and the persons he invites and appoints to fulfill the positions of Huntsmen, Whippers-In and Field Masters. He sits as a voting member of the Hunt Committee during his term of office.

The Master is responsible for the over all operation of the Pack and Staff, and functions as a Huntsman, Whipper-In or Field Master on any given day. His basic duties are:

1. Planning a schedule of meets for the season to fairly hunt the country; preparing the fixture card and verifying dates with owners and hosts. Our hunting territory is that of the Pickering Foxhounds, the Brandywine portion of the Radnor Hunt, and portions of Mr. Stewart's Cheshire Foxhounds with their kind permission.
2. Development of hunting locations, and ongoing contact with property owners and tenants before and after each hunt takes place.
3. Liaison with the registered hunts, farmer packs, and the Ardrossan and Apple Grove Beagles to avoid hunting conflict.
4. Liaison with the National Beagle Club to include paying annual pack dues and cabin bills, and to assure field trial fees are paid on schedule and Stud Book entries are properly recorded.
5. Liaison with the Bryn Mawr Hound Show Association to make entries and organize show participation.
6. Development and training of the Hunt Staff.
7. Development and training of Hounds, including acquisition and drafting of Hounds with other packs to strengthen the breeding gene pool. Maintains the Kennel Stud Book.
8. Maintenance of Kennels and the Hound Trailer, and the barn and drive-in area of the property generally.



9. Supervision of Kennelman.

10. Maintenance of a veterinary care schedule, to include annual inoculations and monthly worm and tick preventive medications. Assures that any specific care of injured or infected Hounds is properly conducted.

11. Assures that a record of Hound exercise, hunting, veterinary care and treatment, and hot bitch and breeding records, is continually updated and evaluated.

The Field Master is responsible for the conduct of the Field (subscribers and guests) on the properties we hunt. He is appointed by the Master and acts under his supervision. His basic duties are:

1. Leading the Field across the country to assure that they are in position to see Hounds hunting without pressing too closely on the Pack. A good rule of thumb is 30-40 yards behind Hounds. The Huntsman may at times ask that the Field be held up if he wishes to check back over an area for game before moving on.

2. Controlling the Field to prevent damage to fences, growing or unharvested crops, and to avoid disturbance of livestock, during the course of a hunt.

3. Keeping the Field reasonably **quiet** when the Pack is seeking game.

4. The Field Master should be at the location of a meet at least a half hour before the scheduled time for Hounds to move off, to check with the property owner and be able to relay any requests to the Master and Huntsman on their arrival.

5. At the meet, he makes sure that people park with respect to lawns, driveways and entrances, in locations specified by the property owner, and that all of the Field are safely off the property at the end of the day.

The Huntsman is responsible for the physical fitness and training of the Pack (and the Whippers-In!) and the hunting of the Hounds

at scheduled and bye-day Meets. He is appointed by the Master and functions under his supervision. His basic duties are:

1. Training and evaluation of young Hounds and the working Pack.

2. Training and evaluation of the Whippers-In, and recruiting lean, fit, young, enthusiastic, brilliant young Whippers-In, preferably rated cross-country runners.

3. Maintaining a schedule of Hunting/Exercise throughout the year, and getting schedule sheet copies to staff and Master, to assure that the days are properly covered to exercise/train/hunt Hounds.

4. Maintaining the Kennel Record Book to assure that all entries are up to date: Condition of Hounds, Hot Bitches, Condition of Kennels and the property. Reports problems to the Master and Kennel Huntsman immediately.

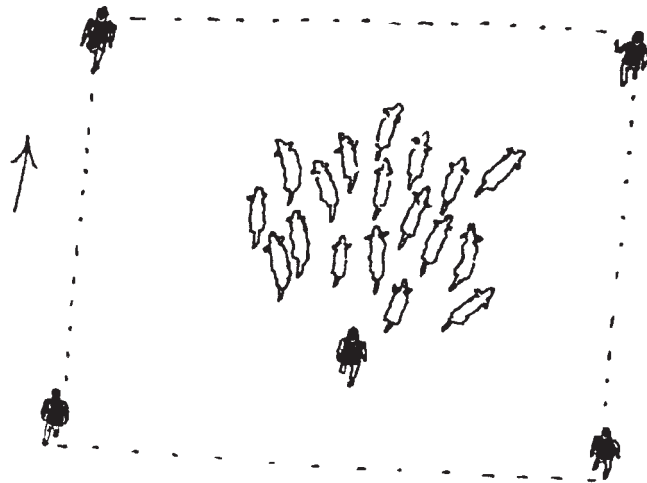
5. In an emergency takes injured Hounds to our Hunt Veterinarian, calling ahead to assure no time is lost waiting upon arrival. If a Hound cannot be safely moved, arranges with the vet for an emergency visit after isolating it where it lies by removing the others to a holding stall, until the Hound is examined and can be moved.

6. Hunts/exercises the Pack on specified days, carded Meets and Bye-days, in rotation with other Huntsmen, at properties specified.

7. Contacts the Master to let him know of time and location of Hunting on Bye-days, so that the Master can follow up with property owners in the area, including other Hunts. Advises the Master if he has a conflict with any date on his schedule, and whether or not he has been able to swap the date with other Huntsmen.

The Whipper-In is responsible for the control of Hounds at exercise and in the Hunting Field, to aid the Huntsman in these activities to the best of his ability. He is appointed by the Master, and functions under the direction of the Huntsman of the day. His basic duties are:

1. Working with the other Whippers-In to contain Hounds and encourage or correct them as necessary to function as part of the Pack.
2. Takes his cue from the Huntsman for the direction the Pack will be moving, and positions himself to assure Pack integrity will be maintained.
3. To continually watch for game and riot, and keep in touch with the rest of the staff through the course of the hunting day or exercise.
4. Aids the Huntsman in preparing for feeding, kennel cleanup and loading and transporting of Hounds on hunting days, exercise, field trials and hound show events.
5. Assures that the exercise and hunting schedule is properly staffed, and if a conflict develops, notifies the Huntsman and tries to get an alternate for the day.
6. Gets out as often as possible to learn the characteristics of all the Hounds, and works to learn the country thoroughly to help provide good sport.



II

To hunt our pack of Hounds, the Huntsman must establish a strong bond with them. Sitting with Hounds in kennels and relaxing and talking to them when there are no other distractions is the best starting point. The Huntsman should be at kennels and get with each kennel group for at least 5-10 minutes before walking out the pack or hunting. The time can best be judged by the time it takes for them to settle down and sit with you on their benches. Then, when you move to the next lot, you'll find they won't rush at the door to get out with you when you tell them to stand back as you leave. They are relaxed and you've made contact.

When at exercise getting Hounds out, let the timid ones out first, and make sure they're outside the barn. The more aggressive ones are far less likely to mob them out in the open, as you know. Anticipate the problem. Get out with the timid Hounds, then have a Whipper-In let the rest out to join you. All are far less likely to hang back and get into trouble with you out in the paddock anyway. They want to be out and also *with you*. If you go back in, most of the crew will follow...so make sure you have everything you need, and send a Whipper-In back for anything you've forgotten.

Before moving off, remind the staff about our square formation—two whips on front right and left, two whips on rear right and left. That way there's always someone on a corner, no matter which way the pack swings. They should stay outside Hounds and let them race and potter about with you til you get near a fence or a road, before tightening up the formation to “pack up” Hounds. On a road, work with Hounds and command “Hold Over—hold over to me”—proceeding for a bit with Hounds on the left, then the right side, to make sure they'll move over on command when traffic approaches. When you come to a blind bend in the road, be sure a Whipper-In goes on ahead to warn of approaching vehicles. Vary the short walks from the lower fields to the upper hill and back with a full circuit around the rim of all the hillside pastures and across the road to the Brandywine pasture for a swim. Marsh Creek Park is open to us for

exercise all summer long, and a long walk around the Chalfant Road area with a swim in the lake is a nice variation. The same thing every time can get old, and Hounds are more likely to look for action.

When hunting on the property, it is best to get hounds out into the paddock or walk them out first to settle them down—at least in the lower field and back—so they are stretched and emptied out and ready for business. Take out only the hounds you are planning to hunt, so you’ll lose no time getting started. If you have enough time to hunt two packs (each lot should have a minimum of an hour hunting time), by all means do so. A mix of steadier and less steady Hounds should be worked, to get the latter working better each time. If you have time to hunt only one pack, walk the rest around the upper fields to get them settled. They will have been wild to get out and hunt while you had the first lot out. The farther from kennels you hunt, the better. We can’t hunt on the property in deer season. We will check the dates each year and they will be noted at kennels.

Church Farm School is open to us, as are Marsh Creek, Warren Point, the Moores’ Great Marsh, Bedwell’s, Lenfest, Hallman’s and Bob Berry’s. The fields at Marsh Creek Park are available for training and hunteable after Labor Day. These will be monitored for cut crops and we’ll hit them in turn as soon as they are hunteable.

When hunting off the property—either on a bye-day or a carded meet after the season opens, walking out Hounds beforehand is key. They will settle in the trailer, and be much calmer at the meet (and that really is not the place to walk them, except to get to the first draw).

As you hunt each of our locations, you will get a feel for the area, and likely locations for game (as well as the deer and fox trails!). Discuss the area and how you plan to draw it with the staff at kennels and at the meet. Review any trouble spots, and “hot” spots for rabbits. Make sure that the staff have an idea of the general

layout of the property. You can control the action by encouraging Hounds to draw in certain places and directions, to use all the available space and naturally force game out into the open for a run, and views for the field. Have a mental picture of the lay of the land—locations of covers, streams, heavy briar, wire, etc.—so that you can cover the ground easily with Hounds and not get confused as to where you are and what you have already hunted. It pays to walk a property each time before the meet day, as things change year to year, and it gives you a chance to speak with all the neighboring property owners as well. All should be called before and after a meet.

Communicate with your staff to make sure that they are up and in position to help when necessary before drawing the edge of a wood or a particularly large section of briar or swampy area. Make sure someone is on the other side of anything you can’t see through, so Hounds don’t go roaring off after a cat, racoon, or worse, deer or fox.

Give Hounds time to make their own natural cast after putting them into a cover or hedgerow. Then, if most are not trying, go in yourself and call them in, and criss-cross the cover or row as you go to get them in and working. Usually, after they’ve had one run, they’ll settle down and really work for their next rabbit, even on a poor scenting day.

Make sure the staff sends back any Hounds running around outside ahead of hounds which are working. This can cause a change if they see a fresh rabbit pop out, rather than the hunted rabbit, and cause a split of the pack. This is a very serious fault and is at the least disruptive and discouraging to those hounds which are working diligently. If not corrected firmly and swiftly, the practise can become habitual. Older hounds which can no longer keep up will sometimes develop this pernicious habit to keep their former leadership position and should be retired if it can’t be stopped. Staff should encourage lagging Hounds forward as well. The more quietly they can do this, the less disturbing it will be to Hounds which are working the line.

Whippers-In should seldom be seen and not heard until necessary. If they are doing their job, you won't notice them.

It is very important in this regard to signal what you are doing: changes of direction, when you view a rabbit, when Hounds are on and working the right game, when you want Hounds put on to you in a hurry, and when you want them stopped if you view riot. When you, staff or a member of the field views game, quietly communicate it to the staff, and quietly encourage Hounds to work up to the view to hit off the line themselves, rather than make a lot of noise and get their heads. They will not settle properly on the line—some may run it forward and some back, or “heel”—and you may have a mess of a split before Hounds can be collected and got to work all in the right direction. The time for a holler is when a couple of Hounds get a view and race off, to get the rest of the pack on to them as quickly as possible.

Be sure the information you get is clear if you are lifting Hounds to a view, i.e.: whence came the rabbit, where was he last seen, and where exactly is the line he was seen to run. No conjecture will help; it will only cost precious time. The Whippers-In nearest to the direction the rabbit took should be moving well forward, and wide of the line so they won't foil it, to keep it in view for as long as possible. Then when the Hounds do hit it off or work up to where the scent is strong enough for them to run it, the Whippers-In will be in position to stay with Hounds.

When a check (loss of the line because of livestock, newly fertilized ground, standing water, etc.) occurs, Whippers-In should immediately spread out wide to give Hounds room to cast all around the check to recover the line. If they don't recover after making their own cast, gather them and make a 20-foot wide circle cast around the check, and if necessary another about 20-30 feet farther out, to get around the foiled area where Hounds have worked, and try to hit the line afresh; also look for holes around the check and watch to see if

any Hounds are marking.

When you have accounted for your rabbit, either by 1) marking in, 2) recovering the line and running it to ground or 3) recovering and running it to a kill, check the time to see if you have time left to draw for a fresh rabbit, or collect Hounds and blow end of day to go in to tea (or back to kennels for the second pack, if it is a bye day).

Make sure enough staff stays with you to help check Hounds for cuts and burrs, and feeding and cleanup if you are hunting in the afternoon. You will need to call me after hunting, so I can speak from your report when I call the property owner after each hunting day. Good Hunting!




III


The Huntsman's horn and voice in the field serve a double purpose: communication with Hounds and communication with Staff and Field. The Whippers-In also use several voice commands to communicate with Hounds and Huntsman. Using the same (or uniform) voice and horn commands and signals each time helps make communications quicker and clearer. Hounds are easier to handle, and Staff also will find it easier to anticipate and "go with the flow" of the hunt.

The Horn—for directional changes, will be deliberate, rather than rapid. For a view or gone away, or blowing to ground, will be more excited, rapid, with more doubling notes. For riot, will be harsh, discordant, and for End of Day—a long, sad wail.

Notes: Short  Long  Double 
Discord 


Moving Off (or moving to a fresh draw): 

Turning Left: 

Turning Right: 

Reversing Direction (trying back): 

All On (all Hounds are present—a signal to Whippers-In): 

A View (and get Hounds on to Huntsman): 

Gone Away: 

Riot: 

Gone to Ground (and a kill): 

End of Day (going home): 

The Huntsman's voice is usually pitched higher and cheerier than the Whipper-In's. He is usually encouraging Hounds on rather than scolding or stopping them.

Pack In (pronounced pike)! Gather Hounds to move off to draw.

Leu In! Encourage Hounds to go into covers and hedgerows.

Wind'im, wind'im in there! Encourage Hounds to seek out a rabbit.

Huic (pronounced hike) **to Sabine!** Encourage Hounds to go to a Hound that is feathering or has opened on a line.

Tally Ho! A rabbit is viewed (often followed by the direction it is moving, i.e. Tally Ho Right!, Tally Ho Back!, etc.

Forward, on-on-on! Encourage Hounds on that are running on after the rabbit.

Try back (pronounced bike)! Encourage Hounds to work back over a piece of cover they have run through or not worked thoroughly.

Dig'im out! Wind'im! Good Hounds! Encourage Hounds to mark where the rabbit has gone to ground.

Who-oo! Eat'im! Who-oo! Tear'im up! Encouraging Hounds at kill. Try to get a piece for the young entry to eat.

Come away, come! Calling Hounds out of cover.

The Whipper-In's voice is usually harsh, growling and brusque to impart quick response from the Hound. Pitched lower than the Huntsman's so as not to confuse Hounds in the heat of the action.

Pack up, (Sousa)! Pronounced pike—quicker and sharper sound. putting Hounds on to the Huntsman preparatory to moving off, or putting on an errant Hound.

Hold up, (Uwchlan)! **Get back to 'im.** Stopping a straying Hound.

Huic (pronounced hike) **over to 'im!** Turning Hounds when the Huntsman changes direction.

Tally Ho! As above. The Whipper-In will mark where the rabbit first was viewed, and direction last seen, so that the Huntsman can work up to the rabbit and get noses on the line.

WARR FOX (or cat or deer or cur dog)! Warning of **riot** viewed, and stands on the line to stop Hounds off till they are collected and staff is in control.

Get on to 'im, (Magpie), huic to 'im, good Hound! Encouraging a Hound which is lagging behind on to the pack and Huntsman.

Come away, come! As above. Collecting Hounds to hunt in a different spot or to go in at end of day; calling a Hound that is out.

IV

There are three basic requirements for whipping-in to our pack of Hounds, besides being as physically fit as possible, and being able to run a distance of two miles at a fairly steady pace.

1. Time

The Whipper-in must be prepared to have time on a hunting day to be at kennels an hour beforehand (longer when we are hunting at some distance away), and to help after hunting. Appearing at kennels as Hounds are moving off to walk, or at a meet on hunting days is not acceptable, and unfair to hounds and the rest of the staff. The schedule that is circulated to all should be completed and returned as soon as possible to the Master. He can then see if some days are not well covered, and work with staff to make adjustments in advance. If at any time a Whip or Huntsman has a conflict that can't be avoided, he should make the Master aware of the problem immediately and try to get someone who isn't scheduled for that date to swap with him, and let the Master and the person hunting Hounds on that date know the result.

2. Dedication

The job of Whipper-in is not a sometime thing. If our Hounds are to be fit and hunting three days a week, and young Hounds trained, the Whip should plan on a minimum of one day per week with Hounds, the season through.

3. Anticipation

The Whipper-in must become familiar with each Hound in the pack—its appearance, its voice, its reaction to livestock, "cur dogs" (strays), cats, riot, people, sighted game, its way of responding to praise and correction—and whether it has enemies in the pack (this bears directly on which Hounds are together in which lodgeroom). During summer exercise and hunting, the Whipper-In will learn where rabbits are to be found at various meets and where riot (deer trails, stray dogs, house cats, fox and their earths) is normally

encountered at meets and at exercise. He will use this knowledge to position himself to ANTICIPATE the single Hound or the pack reacting to these situations, so he doesn't have to scramble to stop Hounds breaking. Most of the time, just by being there he will prevent Hounds from even beginning to break. They will then be more controllable in future as they become accustomed to restriction, and be less wild and more focused hunters as a pack unit. This will also reduce the amount of yelling and whipcracking, which is very unsettling to Hounds and detrimental to good hunting and sport. While walking Hounds on the road, the same anticipation will cut down on the need for constant correction. The Whipper-In should be continually looking at the road ahead and behind and watching for drifting Hounds, turning them back in before they get out beyond him or drop too far behind. The Huntsmen will use the same command, "HOLD OVER TO ME", when calling Hounds over to one side of the road or the other, and Whippers-In will use the commands, "GET OVER TO HIM", "GET ON TO HIM" OR "GET BACK TO HIM" when Hounds are drifting out too far over to the other side, back or out, along with the Hound's name.

The Hunting Whip is used for two things only, control and discipline. For control, it is used as an extension of the arm to swing out beyond a Hound to turn it back to the pack, along with "GET BACK TO HIM, WAGTAIL", "GET OVER TO HIM, QUARRY", "GET ON TO HIM, TEASEL", "LEAVE IT", "WARR OUT OF IT, SOUSA", etc., delivered in a harsh growl. If the Hound continues, then the command is repeated with a crack of the whip, always making sure that the Hound is *between* the Whipper-in and the Huntsman, and not *beyond* the Whipper-In. If the Hound persists, then a smack with the whip is warranted. The degree of severity must relate to the seriousness of the offense. Continually swatting Hounds is not to be done. Aside from the fact that it usually shows that the whip isn't anticipating, it can ruin a Hound for a day's hunting or longer. With puppies it can result in permanent whip-shyness. Coupling the miscreant to a steady Hound is much less disruptive.

Hound Exercise. This is the time to get to know the names of all the Hounds. How they move and their markings. Which are bold and which are shy. How they react to each other in kennel. It is vital to have an image of each fixed in one's head when hunting begins. Hound exercise is also the time to get to know anything the rest of the staff have learned about the various meets—game trails, danger spots and livestock. And get in the habit of communicating with the rest of the group and using the Hound language we use, and the horn signals. It is valuable learning time spent without the distraction of the field to concentrate on the pack, and pick up every bit of information one can about the countryside.

Hunting Procedures. The Whipper-in aids the Huntsman in four ways during the course of a hunt.

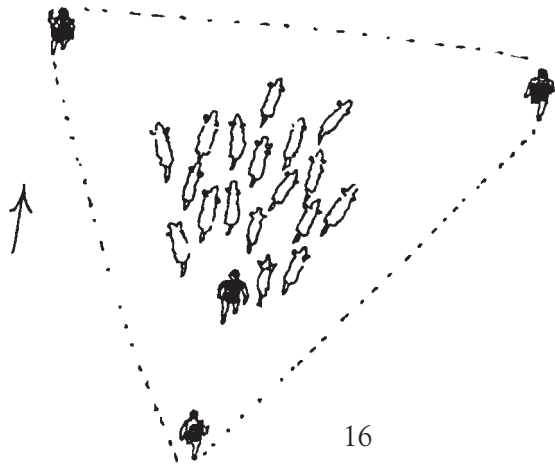
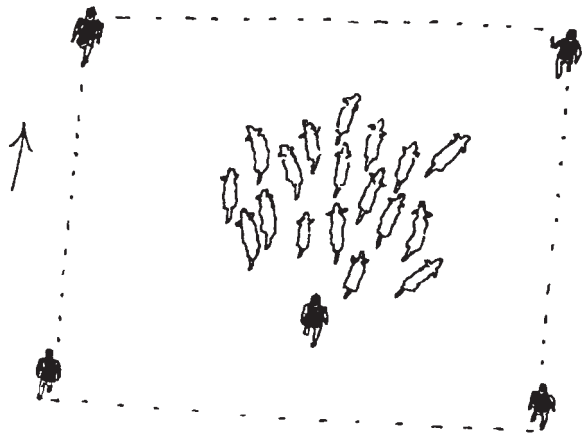
1. Hound Control—packing up Hounds to move from one location to another—bringing on tail Hounds or laggards and turning in skilters or wide ranging Hounds—being in position to stop riot (Hounds chasing anything other than rabbit)—counting Hounds to be sure all are on after crossing a hedge, covert or stream—maintaining contact with other Whippers-In to be sure points are covered, and warning the Huntsman of livestock, traffic and other problems.

2. Protecting Hounds—warding off "cur dogs" or loose livestock from running in at Hounds with as little noise or bother as possible—holding up hounds at a road when game crosses til Huntsman and rest of staff can get up with Hounds.

3. Spotting Game—watching for squatting (sitting) rabbits, doubles (more than one rabbit getting up at once or a fresh one started up by the hunted rabbit and Hounds running nearby)—trying to fix the hunted rabbit's size and color to be able to distinguish between it and a fresh one to prevent a change or the pack splitting (some running each rabbit)—and communicating what is seen only, not conjecture, to the Huntsman.

4. Working as Part of a Team with the other Whips—working during a hunt in a position on a square or triangle around the Huntsman and Hounds, about 40 yards from Huntsman outside

hedgerows or open woodland, to see the most of game and Hound movement. This way, no matter which way Hounds turn, Whippers-In don't have to run around the perimeter to maintain position. When Hounds go right or Huntsman turns right with the pack, the right rear whip becomes the new right front and former right front becomes left front, etc. When Huntsman reverses field to draw back over ground, the back two become the front two. When only three Whippers-In are out, it will require a little more shifting, but works



basically the same. We will rehearse this during the summer before Hunting begins.

“Do’s” in the Hunting Field.

1. Do tally-ho when game is sighted if hounds are drawing, but have not struck the line.
2. Do tally-ho when game breaks cover in which Hounds are working and speaking along that line (or direction)—it lets the Huntsman know Hounds are working on rabbit if he has not viewed.
3. Do tell the Huntsman the last place you viewed the rabbit and from which direction he came.
4. Do immediately yell “WARR DEER” or “WARR FOX” (or cat or wing) and go and stand on the line to stop Hounds til you are sure Hounds are under control, when such riot is viewed. The rest of the staff will get to your side as quickly as possible, to cut off the pack and get them back away from the area.
5. Do count Hounds and let the Huntsman know with an “ALL ON” or “DOWN ONE COUPLE”, etc., when Hounds are coming out of heavy cover, crossing a stream or hedgerow fence, to be sure Hounds are “on” (all present and accounted for) at all times before moving from one area to another.
5. Do put tail Hounds that are dwelling way behind the pack on up to the Huntsman, and hold up Hounds that are running ahead outside of cover (skirting) when the pack is working on the line of a hunted rabbit inside. This keeps more noses where needed, and may avoid getting up fresh game that could cause the pack to split. Also, it is discouraging for the working hounds to have young devils getting the jump on a rabbit they’ve been working hard for. This will eventually cause silent running and jealousy among the pack if not stopped, as well as Hounds over-running when the rabbit cuts right or left.

“Don’ts” in the Hunting Field.

1. **Don’t** chat with the field after Hounds leave the trailer at a meet, until they are trailered up at end of day. Your eyes and ears and voices (and bodies, heart and soul!) are working for the sport and safety of the pack.

2. **Don’t** get in between Hounds and the Huntsman. Always stay *outside* of Hounds and Huntsman.

3. **Don’t** crack your whip while getting to an errant Hound, til you are beyond the Hound. It will only speed him farther on instead of back to the Huntsman.

4. **Don’t** yell for a Hound to stop until you are in position, also. It is a waste of energy—and wind!—which you need to catch him. Calling a Hound’s name is effective to get his head up and slow him when you see him sneaking off—but be on the way outside him as well, and let the rest of the staff know you’re going.

5. **Don’t** waste energy racing around always trying to be in front corner when the pack changes direction. Know where the other Whippers-In are and work as part of the team. If you think a point is uncovered, call out to check before leaving a flank uncovered and going foward. Your turn will come, and how foolish you will feel if a deer runs through right after you have cut forward and the pack goes screaming off through the gap you’ve left!

5. **Don’t** continually be pushing and admonishing Hounds to the Huntsman. If they are constantly going to one side or the other, it is usually because the whip on the opposite side is overzealous, or too close to the Huntsman. This is as true walking out as it is hunting. Also, on a poor scenting day, Hounds will work wider, and may have little interest in drawing cover until they jump a rabbit and have a sight chase to get their blood up. For the first quarter hour, it is best to let them settle down and get on with it.

“Do’s” on Hunting Days generally.

1. **Do** get to kennels at least one hour before the scheduled meet time, and earlier (check with the Huntsman) if the scheduled meet is any great driving distance from kennels. Puppies need walking, hot bitches need a stretch, feed needs making up, water needs changing, help is needed with the trailer and loading Hounds. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, 15 minutes beforehand is sufficient unless we are hunting away from kennels, Again, check with the Huntsman.

2. **Do** let the Huntsman know if you will be arriving late, and try to get a replacement if you can’t make the date you are scheduled for. Master and Huntsman should be informed.

3. **Do** plan on going back to kennels afterwards to help put Hounds in and feed. Check with the Huntsman before leaving, to be sure at least two people will be going with him to unload, feed and clean up.

4. **Do** take great satisfaction in a job well done, and a good day made great by enjoying it in the field with our Hounds, and the pleasure your hard work has, though for the most part unnoticed, given our Field and their guests.



V

The purpose of the Hunt Uniform is twofold:

1. To present an organized, smart appearance to the Field, guests, and farmers and property owners when we arrive with our pack on a Hunting Day. It inspires confidence that we can do our job and are worth the time people take to come see us hunt (of course the first impression can be blown by poor performance in very short order).

2. To put us in the proper frame of mind to pay attention to our jobs and give it 100%, til Hounds are fed and bedded down for the night.

On Hunting Days that are listed on the Fixture Card, the uniform, unless specifically changed by the Master, is as follows:

Black Hunt Cap

Green Hunt Coat with crimson collar and hunt buttons

White shirt with stock or white turtleneck

French Grey or Canary Waistcoat with hunt buttons

White Trousers (thornproof half-chaps can be added)

Footwear: any type of running shoe or hiking boot (preferably conservative color (i.e. no neon/dayglow plastic flashing).

Gloves: the tougher the better—tan, brown or black.

Whip: any type stock that is comfortable, lash (thong) no longer than a yard and a half (as we are on foot—a long foxhunting whip is a real hazard to try to swing and crack when running or standing).

On bye days, a black cap and hunt coat or a waxed coat with hunt colors on the collar should be worn when we are hunting away from the immediate area, to give us some group identification to property owners. Tan brush pants or khakis. When hunting on the property, anything goes.

The uniform for the field trials at Aldie is usually white trousers for the large pack class, and tan brush pants or khakis for the other pack classes, with a turtleneck (white) and hunt coat. We are judged on presentation and appearance as well as performance, so looking like a team counts there as well.

VI

We are all deeply indebted to farmers and landowners for permission to hunt on their property, and for their cooperation in protecting game for our sport. We must be constantly alert to prevent damage to property and injury to livestock at all costs.

The following are a few common sense rules of behavior for people who hunt with Bassets or Beagles.

1. **FENCES.** Climb rail fences at the post where strongest, not in the middle. Slide under wire fences when possible. Don't stretch the wires. If a fence is broken, secure it if possible and immediately report it to staff.

2. **GATES.** If a gate is opened, make sure that the last person through closes it securely. If barways or rails are let down, make sure that they are put back up.

3. **GROUND.** Keep off lawns and gardens near houses, and winter wheat or other soft seeded ground, including golf greens, tees and traps.

4. **LIVESTOCK.** Keep well away from all livestock in fields and paddocks so as not to excite them. Move quietly around the enclosed area, rather than cross it, unless following the Field Master.

5. **SMOKING AND ALCOHOL.** No smoking or drinking permitted in the hunting field.

6. **PARKING AT THE MEET.** Don't park on driveway edges or where inconvenience will be caused to others. Be guided by the Field Master on arrival.

7. **HOUNDS.** Silence is golden when Hounds are drawing, or at a fault, or working a patchy line. And don't call to or urge on, a lagging Hound. Hold up and notify the staff quietly.

8. Finally, be guided by the Field Master, and keep behind him unless Hounds are running. Keep at least 30 yards behind Hounds when running, and hold up for the Field Master as soon as they hesitate on the line. If no Field Master is present or appointed for the day, keep forty yards between yourself and the Huntsman and Hounds when hunting so as not to turn rabbits back into cover, and a good twenty yards when moving off or going home.

THE HUNTING PETIT BASSET GRIFFON VENDEEN

The Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen is truly the most fascinating hound I've had the good fortune to hunt. Our breed was and is bred to hunt. It is used as a gundog singly or in one to three couple packs to flush and drive game to the gun in France today. The first bitch I imported in whelp from France from Pierre Salaün (affixe: des Ajoncs de l'Aulne) had been used to drive boar as well as smaller game. As a "young entry" hound—that is, in its first season of hunting with a pack—it is usually "trop requerent"—too exciteable and driving. There are the rare one or two out of each litter which seem to learn very early from the older hounds, but this precociousness must be carefully watched and developed. Petits have excellent eyesight. This is a very intelligent canine, and the sooner started the better. If the early training is neglected or inconsistent, it will create frustrating problems at every later stage. A hound which can jump a five foot fence and even wear down a deer in a chase must be given the right start.

Starting the Young Hound or Older Novice

Getting the young hound to start with its nose and learn the correct scent is job one, after it has been taught to hold up and walk off lead next to its huntsman, and immediately come to call when summoned. Basic obedience training should be started as soon as you begin playing with a puppy, not when starting to train it to hunt. James Lamb Free's classic, *Training Your Retriever*, describes as good a method as you'll find anywhere. Train yourself thoroughly as well as your hound. Consistency is the key, as well as patience and encouragement.

From about eight months of age, each young hound is taken out with a couple of close working veterans which open solidly with good voice when they find a line, and follow it steadily in cry until they get a rabbit up and running, or mark to ground.

To get the hound started on rabbit, the best way, if you don't have a hunting area that is well populated with game, is to get

permission to take one or two of your entered hounds along with the youngster to a local Beagle or Basset club's enclosed training grounds with a good rabbit population. This way, you'll be assured of game, a secure training area with cover and open ground, and a canine guide which will use its *nose* to search for quarry. Walk out a few times with the hounds before going to the training site so that novice and veteran will be at ease. The veteran will be sniffing out everything it comes to, and the youngster will start checking out what it's doing—with its nose as well as its eyes. It's now time to make the trip to the training grounds.

At the start, keep your young hound on lead until the veteran starts working and opens, then release it to go to the other. The opening strike cries of the older hound will draw the youngster to the line. Rather than have it racing around to check everything out, it will get on a proper line immediately the action starts. Then if they put up the rabbit, quarry and scent will be identified together as they chase it in view. When it gets into cover out of view, the veteran will go to nose again and continue speaking on the line of scent, bringing the tyro to its nose and reenforcing lesson 1, using nose to find the line of the quarry, work it up to the rabbit and mark to ground or drive it out of that cover for another chase. Hopefully the grass/weeds will not be cut too short, so that they will carry a better scent trail and hounds will turn with their rabbit. This will keep them closer to the hunted rabbit, and less likely to change to fresh ones that may pop up as they work the line around from cover to cover. If they find and work game well, about an hour tops is plenty for the first training session. When you can see the tyro start working independently to find game, then is the time to take it out with two couple of the pack for short hunts in your regular country before introducing it into the full pack on a regular hunt.

Conformation Applied to Function

This great hound needs the correct working conformation

if it is to be able to do its job in the field. “Handsome is as handsome does” needs careful development if we are going to perpetuate a breed which in my pack is still hunting well at twelve years of age, three to four days a week. ***Over all balance and freedom from exaggeration of any particular point are the keys.*** The hound should stand over a lot of ground. Its whole make and shape communicate a flow of energy and effortless movement. It should have a reasonably deep heart shaped chest cavity so that the forelegs can swing easily for a reachy stride. A barrel chest usually goes with a hound that is out at elbow and crooked or toed in. The rib cage should extend well back to strong well-muscled loins. Good width across the hips and pelvis goes with a solidly seated femur, strong thighs and second thighs. The shorter the hocks the better, as the drive and propulsion come from the thighs. Too much length in the hock usually shows in cow hocks and a weak rear, lacking drive. The hound may have all the desire in the world, but will wear itself out in a chase of any distance. The hound with cow hocks or the reverse—bowed legs—and toed in or “Chippendale” fronted, will also have developmental foot problems, as uneven pressure will be put on the outer and inner sides of the feet, causing unnatural stress and wear. If the pads of the foot are fleshy or the toes are not reasonably tight, but open, the hound’s usefulness in the field will be short lived. His feet will break down within three or four seasons of hard hunting. Road work and keeping the nails trimmed will help, but cannot prevent their shortening the hound’s career at the very point when his training and entering to hunting is starting to show good results.

When the hound’s running gear is hung right, and heart and lung room are good, it will be able to literally float over the ground at a walk or a run. The proper balance of its parts will enable it to perform tirelessly for good stretches of time and recover quickly from a hard run across country after game. The pack will come into kennel at the end of a long day with their tails up. After cleanup and feeding, you may

hear that most delightful sound to a huntsman’s ear—first one, then another, and another—and then the whole pack will be singing on their benches.

I continue to go to France for PBGV breeding stock to get hounds which have received brevets de chasse and to avoid the variable structural and working conformation of hounds I have seen at shows in the U.S. We keep a small pack of 9 couples and breed one litter a year on average. I’m very lucky to have a good hunting contact in France, Pierre Salaün (pack name des Ajoncs del’Aulne) who has given me outstanding hunting bitches in whelp to his best stallions, National Champions of France on the bench and B.C. Très Bon or Excellent in the field. From this stock we’ve bred National Basset Trials Individual Stakes, Bench, and 3 and 5 Couple Pack Champions, also Bryn Mawr Hound Show Grand Champion Bassets and Pack Champions, and American and Canadian K.C. Champions. Any line breeding itself in a hound pack is carefully watched. Questionable specimens are culled, not sold or given away. Inbreeding should be avoided at all cost, as it further concentrates any weaknesses in a pedigree, making them difficult if not impossible to get rid of, even though it may more quickly strengthen desired gene groups. In the Griffon Vendéen family, Petit and Grand Bassets were only very recently separated into two breed types. The desired physiological differences between the two are much greater structurally than the simple height difference of the 13” and 15” Beagles. This makes it all the more important not to follow the latest fad, but stick to a proper working standard. A clear knowledge of at least six generations of each pedigree and the rules of consanguinity are vital.

Hunting dogs, wild and domestic, which have developed into efficient, long-lived animals have genetically evolved naturally or by hunter/ breeder selection of the best performers to a high class level over generations. Over time they have eliminated structural, neurological and character deficiencies which might limit their longevity and effectiveness in the hunting field. They get the job done in the most efficient way when bringing the quarry to hand. They have the stamina to hunt and account for quarry on a regular

basis. They have the constitution necessary to fight disease, recover from injuries and survive adverse weather conditions from birth through maturity and old age. Such a hardy line will be of ever increasing value to the huntsman, as the experience of a hound from such a line will grow to the point where the final season he is able to hunt may be his most outstanding of all. And, of course, their value for training and entering young hounds properly is beyond price.

The Mind of the Pack Hound

To understand how the hound works, understand that it has a certain basic character which would be revealed by its most efficient place in a pack. It will take longer for a hound which is not a natural leader to start hunting as an individual. The hound which functions best as a hound of the rear—or tail end of the pack confirming the line—is usually the least aggressive hunter.

The **'A' HOUND**—a natural leader, which in a pack should have the whole package, nose, drive, voice, intelligence and the confidence to speak when it finds, and work up to and drive the quarry out of cover. It should not be jealous of its position and run silent, but speak as long as it can work the line. A couple of these in a small pack is plenty.

The **'B' HOUND**—a middle or second rank hound, which will confirm the find and carry it in a body in cry until the pack reaches a point where the line is foiled by other game or fresh quarry or livestock, or the quarry gets to ground. Some of these will be in the front rank and can take the lead if necessary; others will function better confirming and working the line forward. They will eagerly cast themselves at a check to recover the line.

The **'C' or TAIL HOUND**—these carry the line and are more tied to it than the forward and center hounds. They contribute added steadiness to the pack. They are of added help to the Huntsman as they will show him exactly where the line was foiled or lost at a check. He can thus more accurately aid hounds to recover the line if their self casts fail to pick it up again.

All three types are necessary parts of a working pack. They complement each other in their work at various stages of a hunt.

There are basic working qualities which all should have.

1. They should **TURN WITH THE QUARRY, NOT SWING WIDE** when hunting the line, regardless of the speed which they are pursuing it. Precious time as well as the freshness of the scent can be lost by not turning tight with the line of the quarry. The danger of getting up new quarry is increased as well. This may split the pack and spoil a good hunt.

2. They should not continue to speak if they chance to over-run the line when the quarry turns sharply, and not “me too” speak when going to the leader’s find, but only open when they get to the spot and can confirm the scent. Babbling can get the leaders’ heads up, and on a poor scenting day could cause a check or pull some hounds back to them from the find, costing loss of precious time at this critical juncture.

3. Hounds should work with the pack through cover when the pack is running quarry or working up to quarry on a line, and not run around the outside, or ‘skirt’ to gain an advantage. This can cause a change if they see a fresh rabbit pop out, rather than the hunted rabbit, and cause a split of the pack. This is a very serious fault and is at the least disruptive and discouraging to those hounds which are working diligently. If not corrected firmly and swiftly, the practise can become habitual. Older hounds which can no longer keep up will sometimes develop this pernicious habit to keep their former leadership position and should be retired if it can’t be stopped.

4. Nose and voice together are what differentiate an individual hound or a pack from the sporting group, where silence up to a flush is valued. Nose has been bred for in hunting packs, and voice to confirm a find and hold the pack together during a chase. A good low-scenting hound and pack, which can carry the line forward in tough scenting conditions, depend just as much on their handling and training as their innate ability. The patient huntsman, who gives his hounds time to work out a check, will develop the confidence and morale of the pack—that is what will keep them trying and carrying on a hunt when the pack which has been hustled on and driven by their huntsman will fail. It is this high morale which will enable them to speak with confidence when they find or have recovered the line through a hard check. The huntsman’s cheering

them on when they have success, and letting them try before interfering at a check, will make them feel that he values and respects their hard work. They will try all the harder, and not wait for him to overmanage them. Their enthusiasm will translate into increasing drive, confidence and voice proclaiming they are running on the scent as they pursue the quarry.

5. Finally, in this very brief analysis of working qualities, there are three invaluable characteristics in the high class hound's mental makeup—first, actual *refusal to over-run* when the quarry turns—second, *disdain of riot* (deer, fox or other 'trash' which may jump out and run off as the pack drives its rabbit close by)—and third, *refusal to hunt heel*, which is working the line back in reverse when they come to a check and have to cast themselves around the spot to recover the line. These characteristics are vital aids in keeping the hunt going and not changing to fresh game or dwelling on the spot where they have lost the line for whatever reason. They are signs of a sensible and equitable temperament which runs in families, from which you are most likely to produce the occasional non-change hound. Happily, I have found it to be very typical of the hounds I have gotten from France. Ipine des Ajoncs de l'Aulne was outstanding in this regard, as are her daughters and their get.

The PBGV's conformation, strength and balance have made it a useful outcross as well. I drafted Skycastle Duchess '03, a very strong hunting bitch from the first PVGB litter I bred, to Edgar and Ann Hughston, Joint Masters of the Ripshin Bassets in Ellerslie, Georgia, in 1996. Edgar describes her influence on their breeding program as follows:

"Duchess was a great addition to the Ripshin. She was very correct in conformation. She was a hard hunter, and as we were trying the Hardaway three way cross she gave us the third leg. It was a great outcross for us. We bred her to big half bred dogs and she produced hounds such as Duke and Dodie which we have bred on and became the backbone of our pack."

They repeated the use of these first outcross dogs and bitches on one and sometimes two litters a year through 2006. Drafts to other established and starting packs spread the influence of the PBGV

blood within the American pack basset gene pool. In this case, happily, Duchess's sire and dam were top rated French Brevet de Chasse winners and conformation champions as well. One of Duchess's first litter, Ripshin Daphne '97, hunted with Skycastle through 2009 and was one of the best in our pack.

We train our hounds and hunt cottontail rabbit year round in Chester County, Pennsylvania. This includes joint meets, or hunts, with Beagle packs as well during the formal season, October through March. The two breeds work very well together and all will go to the cry of a hound which makes the initial find. Trust is usually very quickly established in a joint hunt, as the hounds have already learned who to trust among their own packs, and cooperate to account for quarry.

Our average schedule involves walking out and hunting three days per week. Wednesdays and Saturdays are training days for the young entry, or first season hounds, starting with one or two couple of older hounds and one, or at most two, youngsters. This hunt is of an hour duration, then the rest of the pack is walked out. Sunday is a formal hunt during the season, mid October through March, and a training hunt and walk in the off season.

The PBGV makes a very good pack hound. The entered hounds I've brought in from France have adapted very well to working with a pack of five couples or more. Though formerly used on more than one quarry and used as gun dogs, they have quickly become steady on rabbit with our pack, and improve each season.

