

FRESH EVIDENCE

From the Campaign for Hunting

Shooting?

The League Against
Cruel Sports says

'You're Next'

**Support for
foxhunting
reaches 10
year high**

Daily Telegraph

**Hunt ban
a threat to
14,000
full-time
jobs**

**Hunting ban
may breach
Human
Rights
legislation**

**'Hunting ban
would be bad
for animal
welfare' says
former executive
of League Against
Cruel Sports**

**Insufficient
evidence to
prove hunting
is cruel**

Lord Burns

**Minister
thanks hunting
association
slaughtermen for
their 'invaluable
work in the
control of Foot &
Mouth'**

**Hunting
suspension
leads to
big lamb
losses**

FRESH

Just over 12 months ago the Government Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs (the Burns Inquiry) was published. It has formed the basis of the continued debate about hunting within Parliament and the media.

However, since that time were you aware that....

EVIDENCE

On cruelty . . .

■ ■ ■ **W**hen the House of Lords debated the Government's Hunting Bill on 12th March 2001, two principal authors of the Burns Report set out to explain precisely what they meant by the expression "serious compromise of welfare".

Lord Burns, Chairman of the Inquiry, said on the issue of cruelty *"Naturally, people ask whether we were implying that hunting is cruel... The short answer to that question is no. There was not sufficient verifiable evidence or data safely to each views about cruelty."*

His colleague, Lord Soulsby, one of the most senior vets in the UK, went further, condemning those organisations who claimed that the expression equated to cruelty and thus justified an end to hunting *"At no point did the committee conclude, or even attempt to conclude, an assessment of cruelty. Yet many bodies have erroneously--I repeat the word "erroneously"--quoted the Burns report, stating that it clearly demonstrated that the practice of hunting wild animals with dogs caused cruelty The report did not state that."*

Thus the only argument used by opponents of hunting following the Burns Report had been dismissed by the very people who wrote it.

**For the full speeches of Lords Burns and Soulsby see:
[www.publications.parliament.
uk/pa/ld/ldhansrd](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldhansrd)**

■ ■ ■ **A**nother senior executive of the League Against Cruel Sports has left the organisation concluding that a hunting ban would be bad for animal welfare and would lead to the decimation of the deer population of the West Country.

Graham Sirl, who had occupied the position of Chief Officer based in London and for the last nine years was Head of West Country Operations based in Somerset, wrote to newspapers in the West Country highlighting the dangers facing the red deer herd should a hunting ban be enacted and the devastation this would cause, not only to the deer populations, but also to the rural community as a whole.

Graham Sirl followed in the footsteps of James Barrington and Richard Course, both Chief Executives of the same organisation, who left for similar reasons. Chairman Mark Davis did likewise.

**For the full text of Graham Sirl's letter see:
www.thisisexeter.co.uk**

■ ■ ■ **A** group of veterinary surgeons, under the leadership of Dr Lewis Thomas and Professor Twink Allen, have prepared a working paper entitled "A Veterinary opinion on hunting with hounds" which examines the welfare implications of hunting and its alternatives. Dr Thomas' group consists of nearly 300 Members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, including a number of leading animal welfare experts and pathologists with incomparable experience in the field of animal welfare. Their conclusions make it perfectly clear that they do not view hunting as causing the infliction of unnecessary suffering and, furthermore, highlight the animal welfare dangers of legislation that could make it a criminal offence.

For the full text of Dr Thomas' and his colleagues report go to: www.countryside-alliance.org/cfh

On pest control . . .

■ ■ ■ **O**ne of the consequences of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak was that the hunting associations of Great Britain suspended hunting activity immediately. Although in some parts of Britain the hunting season was drawing to a close, there were many areas where the normal spring hunting, including the hunts 'lambing call service' was prevented. Within a matter of a few days hunts started to receive calls from anxious farmers who, on top of their fears of FMD, were then suffering acute fox predation resulting in severe lamb losses and in many instances were unable to do anything about it. The effects of the lack of fox control in the Spring will undoubtedly be felt over a longer period of time as the higher fox population levels make their presence felt.

Such was the obvious and immediate reaction of farmers that one of Britain's leading farming unions, the Farmers Union of Wales, issued a press statement highlighting this as a significant consequence of the temporary suspension of hunting.

For the full text of the FUW press release go to: www.fuw.org.uk

On dog ownership . . .

■ ■ ■ **T**he Kennel Club, Britain's leading canine organisation, has always remained entirely neutral on the ethical argument concerning hunting. However, the Club has been closely following the hunting debate with particular regard to the plight of hounds and working dogs whose lives would be affected by a hunting ban. The Kennel Club were particularly alarmed that the affects of the Hunting Bill could have led to misunderstanding, confusion and possibly prosecution of legitimate and dog owners and users. They compared the lack of provision in the Bill as similar to the Dangerous Dogs Act which in their view caused a great deal of unnecessary loss and suffering for both dogs and owners. They concluded that the Hunting Bill could have had a "severe effect not only on hunting hounds and terriers, but on all dogs and dog owners. Furthermore it could signal the end of field trials."

**For full text of the Kennel Club comments please go to:
[www.the-kennel-club.org.uk/pressoffice/
pressofficeframe](http://www.the-kennel-club.org.uk/pressoffice/pressofficeframe)**

On European Law . . .

■ ■ ■ **T**he Hunting Associations of the UK have always said that they would pursue all legal means available to defend the rights and needs of those who hunt. If necessary this would be an issue to be taken up in the European Court of Human Rights. On 11th May 2001 the Joint Committee of Human Rights – an influential committee of Members of Parliament who look at Bills and advise on their ECHR implications – concluded that the Hunting Bill may well breach Human Rights legislation in a number of different ways. Their advice was made available to Parliament and comprehensively reported in the Guardian on 12th May 2001.

**For the report go to: [www.parliament.uk/
commons/selcom/hrhome.htm](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/hrhome.htm) or
www.guardian.co.uk**

On 'expert marksmen' . . .

. . . **D**uring their submissions to the Burns Inquiry and in debates in Parliament, opponents of hunting stressed their view that fox control was simple. The deployment of expert marksmen would ensure that foxes could be humanely and instantly dispatched without risk to either other animals or landusers. The argument was hotly contested by a number of organisations including gamekeepers organisations, who themselves have the greatest expertise in the use of rifles for fox or other pest control of any group in the UK.

It was therefore ironic that during the dreadful scenes that were witnessed during the Foot and Mouth crisis that the RSPCA appeared muddled on the issue of use of rifles. As far as foxes were concerned they argued that these relatively small, very cunning and active nocturnal wild animals could be humanely destroyed at considerable distance, often at night, by the use of rifles.

However, when it came to the slaughter of substantially larger, trusting and sedentary agricultural animals in daylight, in an interview on BBC Radio Coventry on 13th March 2001, the RSPCA's spokesperson Jo Cunningham was quoted as saying "obviously our concerns are that animals may not be shot cleanly and humanely if they are being shot obviously from a great distance."

For the full text of the interview on BBC Radio Coventry and other related stories go to:
www.countryside-alliance.org/cfh

On jobs . . .

. . . **F**ollowing the Burns Report's work looking at jobs related to hunting, the British Equestrian Trade Association commissioned David Corbett of Produce Studies and Ralph Cobham of Cobham Research Consultants to re-examine more precisely what the job loss implications would be from a ban on hunting, with particular regard to the equestrian industry. Their findings, which made the front page news, conclude that the figure of certain job losses would be in the region of 14,000 full time equivalents, but that a considerably higher number, something nearer 30,000 jobs would be adversely affected by a ban.

For the report go to:
www.countryside-alliance.org/cfh

On anti-hunting propaganda . . .

■ ■ ■ **A**ccompanying the debate on hunting with dogs in recent years has always been a high profile campaign of advertising propaganda. Opponents of hunting have used graphic images and expressions to accompany their case which, amongst other things, attempts to solicit financial support or to provoke simple revulsion. The Campaign for Hunting sought to challenge hunting's opponents on a number of issues and occasions. The League Against Cruel Sports were ordered to withdraw an advertisement about hare coursing when the ASA concluded that it was misleading. They then had to be admonished again when they continued to distribute the same leaflet despite the ASA's condemnation.

Within a matter of weeks the League again fell foul of the ASA for an advertisement in 'The House' magazine over the effectiveness of hunting in terms of pest control.

In response to a complaint by a member of the public, the RSPCA were condemned by the ASA for using misleading polling data and attempting to indicate that opposition to hunting was consistently higher than in fact was the reality.

**For the full ASA adjudications go to:
www.asa.org.uk/adjudications**

On the aims of hunting's opponents . . .

■ ■ ■ **D**uring the debates in the Houses of Commons and Lords and the Standing Committee stage of the last Hunting Bill, many members of Parliament raised concerns that a ban on hunting would lead animal rights organisations to pursue campaigns against other field sports such as shooting and fishing. Such allegations were frequently denied and the MPs and others who raised the issues were accused of scaremongering in an attempt to protect hunting.

However on the 1st May 2001 The Times reported that it had seen minutes of a League Against Cruel Sports board meeting which confirmed that their Directors had voted unanimously to campaign against shooting if they were successful with hunting. Thus any previous assurances that shooting and fishing would be safe in the event of a hunting ban have been found not only to be false, but that the organisations concerned were deliberately attempting to conceal their true agenda from politicians and the public.

**For the full Times article go to:
www.the-times.co.uk**

On the law . . .

. . . **M**ost people understand that for law to be effective it needs to have the consent of the public and to be suitably worded for the police to be able to enforce. During the course of the Standing Committee into the Government's last Hunting Bill, enforceability was a critical issue. Supporters of hunting claimed that such was the scope of the proposed legislation that demands on police time would be colossal. The Bill, after all, was designed to make hunting with dogs illegal and thus police would in theory need to follow up all complaints or sightings of people with dogs in areas where wildlife was known to reside. Thus, it was argued, the innocent dog walker could be required to prove to the police that they were not "hunting with dogs", rather than the police to prove that they were. A classic case of "reverse burden of proof".

Furthermore it was argued that confusion would exist with regard to deliberate or accidental hunting, or whether hares should be included in the legislation or rabbits excluded – a definition often hard for the public, let alone the dogs and owners concerned!

For the Government, Mike O'Brien, then a Home Office Minister, claimed that there should be no additional burden on police because the resources currently devoted to dealing with hunt saboteurs would be redirected to this issue. He clearly hadn't grasped the reality. Hunt saboteur activity is restricted to very few parts of the UK, whereas hunting in various forms covers pretty well every square inch of rural Britain. Thus for example isolated and lonely areas of upland Wales would become the most likely spots for hunting, where currently there are no hunt saboteurs and the present police force would be stretched to cover it. In addition, the police are anxious to retain goodwill in rural areas relying on country people to be their 'eyes and ears'. If the police were required to investigate every incident referred to them by a member of the public, some of whom would have a personal grudge to bear, then this system of goodwill would soon diminish.

Add to this the fact that the Police Federation on 15th May called for the reopening of 600 rural police stations and the matter is put in perspective. The Federation's point was that in rural areas police forces have been reduced to a dangerously low level.

If those forces were to be required to police a hunting ban, many more policemen and far more resources would be required.

For the full story please go to:
www.telegraph.co.uk

On Foot and Mouth . . .

■ ■ ■ **A**t the early stages of the Foot and Mouth outbreak it was clear that a substantial cull of agricultural animals would be required. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) had a serious problem on its hands. It needed to find a large number of individuals qualified in the skills of slaughtering large animals, who were available and had the necessary equipment to do the job.

The UK hunting network was ideally placed. Hunting had been suspended and the hunt staff, many of whom were qualified slaughter men, were available to be deployed to any part of the UK to join slaughter teams in this distressing work.

The offer to make them available was made on a number of occasions to MAFF and yet it took five weeks and the intervention of the Army for it to be taken up. Immediately the Hunting Associations put together a network of competent slaughtermen which at one stage represented over 30% of the UK cull team, and according to certain army officers, was the difference between getting on top of the problem and letting it run out of control.

Many hunt employees spent a considerable period of time away from home in dreadful conditions, dealing with farming families on the brink of despair. The reports and letters, which have been sent to the hunting associations since their return, have been extraordinary. Letter after letter commending the men for the humane and efficient way in which they dealt with a particularly unpleasant situation was a great accolade to the quality of hunt staff in the UK. It prompted Joyce Quin MP, then Minister of State in the Department of Agriculture (and an opponent of hunting) to write to the MFHA on the 9th May saying "May I nevertheless express my thanks for the invaluable work of the hunting association slaughtermen. They have played a crucial role in the successful control of the Foot and Mouth disease outbreak, particularly in the Cumbria region."

MAFF's state veterinary service in Carlisle added "we have been impressed with the dedication and professionalism of the teams that have worked in the area. Their work in Cumbria has proved invaluable in controlling this disease and I know the vets who worked with them on the ground appreciated their compassion and efficiency."

For full text of these letters go to:
www.countryside-alliance.org/cfh

On public opinion . . .

One of the central arguments of opponents of hunting in support of a ban has been their consistent claim that a “large majority” of the British public want hunting banned and therefore it is the duty of politicians to ensure that the “will of the people is enacted.”

Polls taken by leading polling organisations since 1997 have generally solicited a yes/no answer to the question of hunting being banned. Questions have been phrased in many different ways and this of course has some bearing on the answer and thus on the poll results.

In 1997 the "black and white" question "do you think hunting should be banned?" attracted a positive response in the region of 73%. However, as time and the debate moved on, enthusiasm for a ban slipped from that level as the public became more aware of the issues and more conscious of the facts and the actual implications of what it involved.

When the issue was last put before Parliament politicians were offered three choices

- To enable hunting to continue under the present system of independent supervision.
- To allow it to continue under a system of state regulation or licensing.
- To ban the activity outright.

When the public were given the same choice via opinion polls, the result indicated that support for a ban dropped dramatically. The last poll taken by the Countryside Alliance showed that only 37% of those questioned preferred an outright ban, 58% preferring a system of regulation (36%) or supervision (22%).

It seems that instinctively British people would always prefer a sensible solution to a draconian one. These results were not exclusively found in polls commissioned by the Alliance. Channel 4's Powerhouse programme produced a similar poll and with a similar result. Most internet and phone polls have consistently shown that strength of feeling opposes, rather than supports, a ban. Even a MORI poll for The Economist, just before the Election, only came up with a result of 57% in favour of a ban and that question offered no choice at all. Interestingly it was MORI in 1997 who boasted the figure of 73% opposed to hunting, so even under their own similar polling conditions support for a ban has declined dramatically.

**For full story and polling data go to:
[www.countryside-alliance.org/news/
latest01/index](http://www.countryside-alliance.org/news/latest01/index) or www.mori.com**

**The Countryside Alliance
Campaign for Hunting**

367 Kennington Road, London SE11 4PT
Tel: 020 7840 9210 Fax: 020 7787 0082
Email: cfh-info@countryside-alliance.org



THE COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE CAMPAIGN FOR HUNTING

