



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY LEGISLATORS

What is foxchasing? (Also often asked as “What is it that you actually do?”)

American Foxchasing is the organized finding and pursuing of a fox using the art of scenting with a pack of foxhounds, which are directed by a group of people known as “staff” (some on horseback, but not all) who are responsible for the day’s strategy for finding a scent, with the hopes that the scent will lead them to the fox itself (it does not always, as fox are crafty). The reward for actually finding a fox is a chase, until the fox is tired of his game and pops into the nearest groundhog hole or other handy den. For the staff managing the hounds (with GPS, radios and calls on a horn), it is a sport of understanding pack dynamics and well as fox tendencies to ensure that the entire pack is working as one body, but also staying safe and within the permitted territory. For the spectators pursuing the hounds pursuing the fox, it is the only spectator sport which requires the spectators to also be active – as being mounted on a horse provides the best odds for keeping up with the hounds and getting to see the fox. Although there are spectators that also follow in vehicles and on foot.

Since the 1970s, Americans have distanced themselves from English foxhunting, which focused on killing the fox. For this reason, Marylanders now refer to themselves as “foxchasers” not “foxhunters,” as our objective is not to kill, but merely to find and to chase, until the fox decides the game is over and ducks into a convenient hole.

In Maryland, “foxchasers” should not be confused with those individuals who, using weapons, do “reduce to personal possession” the fox (weapons include firearms, traps, etc.) These “fox hunters” are currently required to be licensed and they must also get a furbearer permit (see below for more information on furbearer permits).

Do foxchasers hunt private or public land?

The short answer is “both.”

The more precise answer is that some packs are fortunate enough to be able to hunt only private land; some packs have only public lands to hunt (which is often more complicated than private land); some packs hunt a combination of both private and public, often on the same day, as they are pursuing a quarry that does not recognize property lines.

Do foxchasers get permission now from landowners?

The short answer is yes.

The detailed answer is that it is part of the responsibility of the leadership managing each pack of hounds to obtain permission from all landowners. The land required for the sport of foxchasing is vast, with hundreds and hundreds of acres needed for each day out. This is in stark contrast to the needs of individual hunters with weapons.

Depending upon where the foxhounds are being hunted on any given day, there may only be one landowner for that day, or there may be 25 landowners for that day. It is the responsibility of the leadership to ensure they have permission from each landowner each time a hound might possibly set foot on their property.

Furthermore, responsible organizations also carry insurance and list their landowners as “also insureds;” for those packs hunting on public land, this would include the State of Maryland.



In Maryland, how many packs of foxhounds are there?

The short answer is that we, MAWC, know of 14 packs that chase in Maryland.

The actual answer is that there is always the possibility that there are individuals out there who keep a few hounds and go out on their own, and we just don't know about them.

How many total Maryland mounted foxchasers are there?

The number of individuals mounted on horseback participating in the sport is estimated between 500 and 600. This is down significantly from ten or fifteen years ago, when we could count 1,200 +/-.

Why do foxchasers not want to financially contribute to Maryland's public lands and wildlife?

We do currently support Maryland public lands by purchasing the required DNR Individual Furbearer Permits (\$5) and the DNR Group Furbearer permits (\$50).

And we are willing to also be licensed. We want to support our public lands; we understand that increasing the number of licenses increases the federal funding Maryland receives from the Pittman-Robertson Act, even if the final number is not that significant. And by being included in the definition of "hunting," we will be included in the protections of Maryland's "Right to Hunt" statute.

Then why are the foxchasers opposing HB 471/SB634?

Before we support including foxchasing in the definition of "hunting," a thorough review of all the existing statutes and regulations, which were written for individuals hunting with a weapon (not a group of people on horseback managing a pack of hounds and being following by another group of people on horseback) needs to be conducted, with the involvement of the foxchasing community, to avoid conflicting and contradictory applications, such as the regulations that require licensed hunters to carry the written permission on their body when hunting (individuals hunting with a weapon are generally dealing with one or two landowners, not 45 mounted riders and 20 landowners), and the unknowns about what other statutes and regulations written for individuals with weapons apply to groups with no weapons (such as, but not limited to, seasons, Sunday hunting, the opening day of firearm restrictions, etc.). If HB471/SB634 were to pass this year as drafted, then the legislator will end up seeing us back every year as we try to "fix" this or that, in an endless game of whack-a-mole.

What would the foxchasing community like to see happen?

We would like the opportunity to work with our legislators, outside of session, to craft a solid bill.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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