

The movement to ban hunting

The historical context to ban hunting

- The hunting ban followed centuries of action by people who believed it was wrong to set animals upon other animals for entertainment. People called for hunting to be banned in the same way that bullbaiting, bear baiting, dog fighting and cock fighting were banned.
- For further details on the 18th century debates on bullbaiting in Parliament see IFAW's submission to the Burns Inquiry (<http://www.huntinginquiry.gov.uk/mainsections/huntingframe.htm> IFAW submission, response to question 10, section 5).
- On April 24 1800 Sir William Pulteney attempted to introduce a bill to ban bull-baiting. During bull-baiting, dogs were set on a chained bull, clamping their teeth into its flesh.
- The environment at this time did not seem to view animal welfare as a priority and twenty one years later in 1821, the introduction of a measure to prevent the ill-treatment of horses was laughed out of the House. William Windham, Minister for War, opposed the Bill on the ground that there were other more pressing issues to legislate on. He also argued that the bull gained pleasure from the activity.
- In December 1869, Anthony Trollope, the novelist and enthusiastic fox hunter said that fox hunting differed from bull baiting where the main objective was to watch the animal being tortured. Trollope also felt that without hunting, foxes would have long ago become extinct. Instead the fox was 'almost worshipped', and looked after so that men and women all over the country could enjoy hunting.

Campaign groups

Listed below are just some of the organisations involved in the movement for and against the hunting ban.

All Party Parliamentary Middle Way Group

- The Middle Way Group supports a science-based route to improve welfare for all wild mammals

Countryside Alliance

- Supports all forms of hunting with dogs. Feel the ban was an unnecessary interference with their rights to choose what they do with their lives.

Felix the Fox

- The symbol of rural defiance that fronts a campaign to ensure the hunting act is repealed and keep the hunting debate in the public eye until that event occurs.

Hunt Saboteurs Association

- Founded in Britain in 1963 the Hunt Saboteurs Association (H.S.A) was the first to confront the hunting of animals for sport, particularly fox hunting with hounds.
- The underlying principle of the HSA is that every animal has a right to be protected and saved from death at the hands of groups who see it as a sporting activity. They believe the only way to prevent this is by disrupting hunts "without malice to the hunters" in the hunting field whilst hunts are in progress.

International Fund For Animal Welfare (IFAW)

- IFAW's aim is to improve the welfare of wild and domestic animals across the world.

League Against Cruel Sports

- The League are opposed to animals being killed for sport. Their activities involve political lobbying and grass roots campaigning, including recording hunts.

RSPCA

- The RSPCA believes hunting causes unnecessary suffering and other more humane methods exist where it is necessary to control numbers.
- Some of the founders of the RSPCA in 1842 were involved in fox hunting.

Real Countryside Alliance

- The militant pro-hunting group which promised "a campaign of disruption" that would be "very strongly anti-Blair and anti-Labour".

Liberty and Livelihood March

- In September 2002, 407,000 people marched in London to protest about Liberty and Livelihood.
- The main focus of the protest was opposition to the proposed ban on hunting with dogs in England and Wales but a wide range of other grievances from rural communities were also linked with the demonstration. The protesters demanded that Government & Parliament:

“promote a just and equitable solution to the manufactured issue of hunting with hounds”

“defend the right of rural people to live their lives responsibly in the way they choose”

“protect rural people from prejudice, particularly against all country sports including hunting with dogs”

“address the real problems of the countryside that are destroying the communities, culture and their children's future”

- The march moved through London from Hyde Park, through Whitehall and past the Cenotaph, where the marchers were silent, and on past Downing Street.
- People marching included ex leader of the Conservative party Iain Duncan Smith, actors Vinnie Jones and Edward Fox, television presenters Melvyn Bragg and Anne Robinson, explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Earl Spencer, the brother of Diana, Princess of Wales.
- More than 2,500 coaches and 31 specially chartered trains carried protesters to London. People also took part from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the USA and across Europe.
- The Police Force drafted in 1,600 extra officers.
- The Countryside Alliance delivered a 10-point open letter to the Prime Minister at the end of the march.

The Burns Inquiry

- A government inquiry into hunting with dogs in England and Wales which reported in June 2000. It was chaired by Lord Burns and the inquiry was made up of 461 written submissions and 5945 letters. Commissioned research, visited a variety of hunts.
- The inquiry was then followed by three days of public hearings in September 2002 chaired by Alun Michael, Minister for Rural Affairs.

The passage of the Hunting Act

- There are two ways for a law to be passed by Parliament. The usual way is for the Houses of Commons and Lords to agree the same text.
- The other way is enforced when the House of Lords refuses to agree with the democratically elected House of Commons. This procedure is known as the Parliament Act. It is fairly rare, but has happened twice since the 1997 General Election.

- On November 18th 2004, the Parliament Act was used to pass the Hunting Bill into law, after it was presented as the same bill in early July 2003 and again in September 2004.
- The Parliament Act of 1911 “reaffirmed the supremacy of the House of Commons over the House of Lords”. It removed the Lords' right to veto bills passed in the Commons and limited its ability to delay such bills. The Speaker of the Commons, Michael Martin, invoked the Parliament Act, overriding the opposition of the House of Lords and bringing an end to fox hunting in England and Wales.
- Within hours, the Queen gave her royal assent and it was decided that the total ban on hunting with dogs was to be enforced from February 18 2005 at the end of the hunting season.
- Under the Hunting Act 2004:
 - Two hounds can be used to follow a scent and to flush out a fox.
 - It is an offence to hunt a wild mammal with a dog.
 - Forms of hunting that are exempt include:
 - Using only two dogs to flush a mammal
 - Flushing a mammal from cover when connected to falconry.
- The government spent 700 parliamentary hours discussing the bill before it was finally made an act.