

**Countryside Alliance Ireland**

**&**

**The Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds  
Association**

**&**

**The Ulster Farmers Union**

**A Memorandum of Understanding and  
Co-operation**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this document, developed by Countryside Alliance Ireland and The Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association in conjunction with the Ulster Farmers' Union, is intended to inform and advise on best practice and protocol for those engaged in hunting with hounds on agricultural land, and to encourage compliance.

This memorandum of understanding and co-operation sets out the basis on which Countryside Alliance Ireland, The Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association and the Ulster Farmers Union will co-operate for the good of country sports and the rural way of life in Northern Ireland.

We believe that such co-operation is essential in light of the many threats currently facing Northern Ireland's countryside, which must be addressed constructively and collaboratively by all like-minded people and organisations.

This memorandum re-affirms Countryside Alliance Ireland's endeavours for the benefit of the wider countryside, and combines them with the Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association's responsibilities for hunting, and with the Ulster Farmers Union's responsibility to landowners.

In compliance with the indemnification criteria, Hunts will consult with landowners of potential routes to ensure that there would be full agreement and they have given permission for the activity to take place (see below).

### **1. Planning a hunt on farmland**

When planning a Meet, reasonable distance should be left beyond the planned area, as it is not possible to accurately define the likely course of a Hunt.

### **2. Indemnification**

Hunts that are fully paid up members of Countryside Alliance Ireland are covered by third party insurance for their recognised activity. However, Hunts may be insured with other recognised insurers, i.e., The NFU Mutual. These hunts will have mentioned on their hunt cards that they are covered by Countryside Alliance Ireland or The NFU Mutual or other recognised insurers.

This Public Liability provides cover for damages and claimant's costs and expenses and defence costs and expenses incurred with the written consent of the Insurance Provider for personal injury and property damage while participating in a legal and "Recognised Activity" of the policy holder.

The policy extensions include "Indemnity to Principal and others", which includes a landowner over whose land a Hunt has passed. Summary of cover is attached. A full list of paid-up Hunts will be made available to the Ulster Farmers Union on request.

### **3. Before the hunting season and before a Hunt**

A card shall be issued to landowners detailing dates, location of each hunt and contact details for the Hunt should landowners have any concerns; or prior to a hunt the landowner shall receive a visit or communication from the hunt master, hunt representative or a member of the hunt staff who will assess pre-entry land condition and take note of farming activities in boundary fields.

Where necessary, changes will be made to planned area, i.e. fields containing heavily in-lamb sheep should be avoided to prevent stress. Also, if weather conditions drastically change, land owners should contact the Hunt to re-negotiate the planned area. It should be recognised that there may be occasions (death in family etc) when meets will have to be changed at very short notice.

Landowners are requested to inform hunt masters of any disease outbreaks on their land or neighbouring land, so that these areas can be avoided to prevent the spread of animal or plant disease.

#### **4. During a hunt**

Care should be taken of ground conditions during a Hunt, and if conditions are not favourable or the ground is in crop or new grass then mounted riders should never take a diagonal run across the field; instead mounted riders should always follow headlands of permitted lands.

Only tattooed or microchipped hounds owned by packs registered with the relevant hunting association (Irish Masters of Hounds Association, Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association, Irish Masters of Beagles, Irish Masters of Harriers Association and Foxhound Kennel Studbook) should be used.

#### **5. Following a hunt**

It is the responsibility of the hunt master and hunt staff to ensure all hounds are accounted for immediately following a Hunt.

Hunts and landowners should report any damage done, which must be repaired to an equivalent standard to that which existed prior to the hunt within 2 weeks, if practical.

Some repairs, such as ground damage, may need to be conducted during the growing season. This work must be agreed between the hunt master and landowner following the Hunt.

Any repairs must be conducted by experienced individuals or, where agreed, by the landowner who will be reimbursed for costs incurred.

#### **6. Disputes**

Where unresolved disputes arise these will be investigated on an individual basis by the appropriate organisation, i.e. Countryside Alliance Ireland, the Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association, the Ulster Farmers Union or other recognised organisations.

#### **7. Effects and liabilities**

This statement has immediate effect following signature. The two nominated representatives of the organisations in Northern Ireland are responsible for taking it forward together under the authorities they hold.

The statement shall be reviewed regularly and may be amended by agreement between the nominated representatives.

Signed: William Montgomery  
Date: 12.03.12

**William Montgomery**  
Chairman, Northern Ireland Masters of Hounds Association

Signed: Lyll Plant

Date: 12/3/12

**Lyll Plant**  
Chief Executive, Countryside Alliance Ireland

Signed: John Thompson  
Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2012

**John Thompson**  
Ulster Farmers' Union President