

The information below describes the vocalisations that may be heard in the hunting field relating to the direct control and instruction of hunting hounds.

These relate to fox hunting, but the principles apply equally to hare hunting (with beagles, bassets and harriers), stag hunting and mink hunting

The function of the huntsman's voice

In combination with the horn, the huntsman's voice connects him with the hounds, his staff and all the people out on a hunting day following on horseback, on foot or in vehicles.

The volume and tone of human voices vary according to styles of speaking, accent and also depending on how fresh or fatigued an individual is. The same is true for huntsmen who also employ differing styles in their work. However, basic principles do exist.

Implicit obedience from hounds in response to vocal orders is the ultimate objective in the hunting field. To achieve this, skill, pitch, tone and emphasis are more important than volume.

The tone of voice is used in various ways:

Encouraging

When urging hounds to do something which they are not keen to do, such as entering a thick and thorny covert to look for a fox or cross a river swollen with flood water.

Short notes blown on the horn often accompany the encouraging use of voice when hounds are searching for a fox. The aim of the huntsman is to unite his hounds with horn and voice instructions so they hunt the fox across open country as a unified pack.

Soothing

To calm and reassure the nerves of over-excited hounds.

Harsh

There are times when hounds hunt an animal other than the intended quarry. This is known as 'rioting'. To stop rioting hounds, voice is used in combination with whip-cracking and is known as 'rating'. It is suggested that only hunt staff should perform this function but the reality is that riders or other followers who are close to hounds may be heard shouting harshly and cracking whips in front of hounds in this situation.

Exultant

This term may properly describe the celebratory whoops of delight, encouragement and "many bloodthirsty expressions" made by the huntsman at the kill.

The vocabulary of hunting

The following vocabulary used in the hunting field are examples of the way which hounds are spoken to:

"Bike" is a fundamental order, either spoken with a soothing tone or uttered harshly. This means "back" and is one of the first instructions a hound puppy needs to learn to obey instantly.

"Leu-in try" is one of many voice instructions used by a huntsman to encourage hounds to look for a fox.

"Harrk Fo-or-orrard" is used to encourage hounds to join others who are hunting the line of a fox, or to move hounds on to a place where the fox has been seen some way ahead.

"Holloa" is pronounced 'Holler'. This is the word used to describe the exultant, high-pitched screaming yell sounded by a person who has seen the fox. Anyone may holloa a fox. The intention of sounding a holloa is to inform the huntsman that a fox has been seen.

Blowing a whistle as an alternative to the human holloa. Some huntsmen prefer staff and followers to blow a whistle when a fox has been viewed leaving a covert.

"Huic" is an encouraging instruction that is pronounced "hike". May sound like "hike to him, hike to him" or "hike to (hounds name)" if cheering hounds on to a reliable individual or couple of hounds who are barking in response to a fox's scent. Hounds hunt with more urgency when cheered on by the huntsman.

"Huic Holloa" is pronounced 'Hike Holler'. This encouraging instruction, shouted or screeched, is intended to inform hounds, huntsman or both that a holloa has been heard further away. The whipper-in, whose job is to assist the huntsman, might give this instruction three or four times in quick succession.

Whippers-in may often be noted to possess a rather high-pitched voice in the hunting field. Renowned huntsman and Master of hounds Captain Ronnie Wallace is quoted as saying, "A whipper-in with a high-pitched voice is admirable".

"Tally-Ho" is pronounced 'Tally-O'. This encouraging or exultant yelled cry may be given instead of a holloa by a follower of the hunt when a fox is seen in the open.

"Tally-Ho Back" is pronounced 'Tally-O Bike', indicating that the fox has been seen exiting the covert but then returning from whence it came. It may be described as encouraging.

"Tally-Over" signals a fox seen to cross open ground or a ride within a woodland setting. It can be instructional to other personnel or encouraging when repeated in rapid succession to hounds.

"Ware" is a shortened version of 'beware' pronounced "war", spoken or shouted harshly as a warning and often accompanied by use of a cracked whip. It may be used to stop hounds on a riot or to correct them from hunting the scent of a fox

backwards.

"A rolled tongue is used to make a rapid "brrr brrr!" sound. This can be employed by a huntsman to unsettle a fox while hounds are searching. Alternatively a rolled tongue sound may be made to turn a fox back from where it came or to change direction. Examples of this are during autumn cub-hunting when foxes are encouraged to stay in the wood, field of maize or other covert where hounds are able to hunt them in close proximity. This will often be accompanied by cries of "aye-aye Charlie" and saddle slapping, but may be used to stop a fox heading towards dangerous or forbidden ground.

REFERENCES

1. "A Manual Of Foxhunting", Wallace R., ed. Clayton M., Swan Hill Press, Shrewsbury, 2003.
2. Beagling in Britain, circa 2000, Taw Vale, Sandhurst & Aldershot, Trinity Foot, Colne Vally, Glyn Celyn [DVD], Countryside Audio & Visual, Hampshire.
3. "Fox-Hunting", Beaufort 10th Duke of, Alden Press, Oxford, 1980.
4. Fox Hunting in Hampshire & the Isle Of Wight, circa 2000, Vine & Craven Hunt, New Forest Hounds, Hursley Hambledon Hunt, Garth & South Berks Hunt & Isle of Wight Foxhounds [DVD], Countryside Audio & Visual, Hampshire.
5. "Hunting By Ear: The Sound-book of Fox-hunting", Berry M.F. & Brock D.W.E., H.F & G. Witherby Ltd, London, 1960.
6. Hunting In Wales Volume 1, circa 2000, West Wales MH, Brecon & Talybont FH, Llangeinor FH, South Pembrokeshire FH, David Davies FH [DVD], Countryside Audio & Visual, Hampshire.
7. Hunting With The Zetland, circa 2004, Metcalfe W., Vigors N. & Jukes D. [DVD], Countryside Audio & Visual, Hampshire.
8. "The Chase: A Modern Guide To Foxhunting", Clayton M., Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd., London, 1987.
9. "The Hunting Horn: It's History And Use Today", circa 1995, Barclay J., Beaufort 10th Duke of, Wallace R., Lloyd D., Compton I., Adams G., Sugar M. [CD], Countryside Audio & Visual, Hampshire.

© 2008 IFAW