



Rockbridge Hunt *NewsHound* January 28, 2021

“Foxhounds are blue-collar canines, the hardworking skilled craftsmen of the dog world. They’re good at what they do and what they do requires stamina and strength, focus and determination. They have neither interest in nor aptitude for tricks. They like songs with simple lyrics and a predictable beat, a cold drink after a hard day’s work, a chance to rock back in the recliner and soothe their tired feet. They enjoy the company of other hounds more than fawning attention from humans. A small few rise to fame, like a coal miner’s daughter with a gifted voice, but most live out their lives in steady, dependable obscurity.”

~J. Harris Anderson

Happy New Year!

1. New Members! We are delighted to announce that we have three more new members since the last *NewsHound*. Please welcome Louise Webster, Kellie Whitfield, and Susan Brady to the Rockbridge Hunt! Mary Wilson Grist has also joined us as a Young Adult Seasonal Capper. They have all been out with us several times this season and are really enjoying the hunting and the company of our hunt members!

2. Opening Meet & Blessing of the Hounds. We haven’t had a *NewsHound* since Opening Meet, so this is a bit late. At our Opening Meet at Broadview, two members were awarded their Rockbridge Hunt colors! Congratulations to Annie Lichtenstein and Emily Kagey! They have both been spotted recently with the green & yellow colors on their formal coats! At the same event, Mallery Lester was awarded the MFHA Fairly Hunted Award. This special award is given by the Masters of Foxhounds Association to any junior who hunts at least five times in a hunting season. By Opening Meet, Mallery had already hunted at least 8 times and she’s been out several more times since. Congratulations Mallery!

Special thanks to the Broadview Ranch family for hosting our Opening Meet this year! Everything has been challenging with the COVID-19 restrictions and we appreciate everyone’s flexibility!

3. The Wind & Winter Weather. Our area received record rainfall in 2020. That’s breaking the record set in 2018 which was roughly DOUBLE the average annual rainfall. If it seems like hunting is often cancelled, you’re right. If you get out on the trails you know there are times when the footing really is treacherous even at slow speeds. While the tracking collars are tremendously helpful, the staff needs to keep up with hounds. No one wants to cancel hunting. The hounds definitely benefit from hunting regularly. The young hounds need to go out more often to really learn their job. Hounds will always get excited about hunting; going out more often lets them settle down faster, learn faster, and become more reliable. The older hounds stay fitter and sounder with more hunting.

When the forecast calls for high winds, there are a number of reasons to cancel:

1. It starts to be not a lot of fun for the riders.

2. The wind carries scent away. In normal conditions, hounds will find traces of scent and work up to the game and get it running. That doesn't happen in the wind. Basically, they've got to be lucky enough to just stumble over the quarry. And in this kind of weather, the quarry is hunkered down somewhere, waiting it out.

3. The wind carries sound away. And the wind makes a lot of noise. In the wind, hounds can't hear the Huntsman. If they try to hunt, they get strung out. Sometimes they won't even try, preferring to stay with the Huntsman. Both of those scenarios are going to happen occasionally, no matter what we do, but it's better to avoid them.

In the wind, hounds can't hear each other. Again, they get strung out.

What happens when they get strung out and why is that a problem? If we were out in open fields, it wouldn't be such a problem. Hounds could see each other and see the horses. Unfortunately, we hunt in the woods and in the hills. If the Huntsman and part of the pack go over a ridge, the hounds that are left behind have no idea where to start looking for them. And we want every hound to look for the pack and Huntsman. We want to encourage them to act as a pack. We don't want them to happily go off hunting on their own. If they do that, it's inevitable that some hounds will get into trouble. That might mean getting into someone's trash or it might mean straying onto the road.

4. The wind means the hounds can't make sense of what they do manage to hear. In these hills and valleys, we get a lot of echoes and hounds have difficulty figuring that out on a calm day. In the wind, that problem is compounded by sounds being carried differently from usual and differently every minute.

5. When the still air temperatures are in the low twenties, the hounds can damage their scenting ability by trying to hunt. That might not apply so much during the day but if we left hounds out at night, it would be colder than that. And when it's windy, hounds are more likely to get strung out and it's MUCH more likely that we'll finish the day without getting all the hounds in.

6. It's not safe to ride in the woods in the wind. We're all aware that limbs and trees blow down. The odds of being hit are pretty slim but not hunting reduces those odds to zero.

So, there are a lot of reasons not to hunt in high winds. Yes, we could probably take out a small group of older hounds and we'd probably get by without any disasters. But it's just not worth it. There is absolutely no way we'd have a great day of hunting in very windy weather. We'd be teaching the hounds bad habits. We'd be taking risks that simply aren't justified.

Most of us are well aware that similar factors apply to our horses and ourselves. We'll try to hunt as much as possible. Thank you for your understanding.

4. Kennel News. Huntsman David Conner reports that the pack is doing very well this season. We have a lot of young hounds new to hunting this year and their training is progressing well. The puppies that were born last October to Amstel '17 and Otter '19 are growing up fast! David has been taking them on walks as a group and they are starting to go on the regular hound walks with the older hounds. David is very pleased with them so far. Following this hunting season, three of our older hounds are going to be retiring – Teasel, Braveheart, and Rambler will all be looking for retirement homes. If you are interested in adopting a retired hound, please contact David, Cindy, or Hugh. Overall, David says we are in a great place with our pack. Now, if the weather would just cooperate!

5. Sedgefield Cup 2021. The dates have tentatively been set for the 2021 renewal of the Carolinas Foxhound Performance Trial – The Sedgefield Cup – March 26-28. The hosts in the Sedgefield Hunt are waiting to make final plans based on what happens with COVID-19 restrictions in North Carolina over the next few weeks. They have promised that if the event is held, all meals and gatherings will be held outdoors and strict COVID-19 practices will be implemented. This wonderful event was canceled last year, but everyone hopes it will be able to safely return this spring.

6. Educational Bits – courtesy of the Education Committee .

Check – When scent has temporarily disappeared.

*Excerpt from **Fox-Hunting** by the Duke of Beaufort*

“Hounds **check**, or stop, when they are unable to own the line -- in other words when they lose the scent. A **check** is the time when hounds are **checked**, and sometimes provides a welcome breathing space.”

*Excerpt from **Red Coats Galloping** by John Welcome*

“Fence after fence they put behind them and still hounds raced on. There was only one semblance of a **check** -- at a place where three little roadways met, and here a shout from a boy on a horse and cart up the road enabled Jimmy to hold his hounds on. They had it again in an instant. The fox had run the road for a short way and had then taken to the grass again.”

7. Rockbridge Hunt Dates for your Calendar

Saturday, March 20	Rockbridge Hunt <i>Closing Meet</i>
Saturday, May 1	Rockbridge Hunt Derby-Day <i>Hunter Pace</i> – <i>hunter pace series</i>
Wednesday, May 12	Rockbridge Hunt <i>Annual Meeting</i> , 7:00 PM, Tex Tilson Lodge - <i>tentative</i>

8. Other Hunt-related Dates

March 22-27	Bull Run Hunt March Madness
Fri. March 26-Sun. Mar 28	Carolinas <i>Foxhound Performance Trial</i> – The Sedgefield Cup – <i>tentative</i>
Saturday, April 3	Farmington Hunt <i>Hunter Trials</i>
Sunday, April 11	Bull Run Hunt <i>Hunter Pace</i>
Saturday, April 17	Glenmore Hunt <i>Spring Hunter Pace</i> - <i>hunter pace series</i>
Saturday, April 24	Bedford County Hunt <i>Hunter Pace</i> at Sweet Briar
Saturday, June 12	Farmington Hunt <i>Hunter Pace</i> at Mint Meadows
Saturday, June 19	Bedford County Hunt <i>Hunter Pace</i> and Judged Trail Ride (series), Goode
Thursday, June 25	Farmington Hunt <i>Junior Foxhunting Clinic</i>
Saturday, July 17	Farmington Hunt <i>Poker Ride Hunter Pace</i> at Indian Echo
Saturday, August 21	Farmington Hunt <i>Foxhunting Clinic</i> – Day 1 at Millington
Sunday, August 22	Farmington Hunt <i>Foxhunting Clinic</i> – Day 2 at the Kennels
Sunday, September 19	Bedford County Hunt <i>Hunter Pace</i> , Goode
Sunday, October 17	<i>Virginia Field Hunter Championship</i> hosted by the Farmington Hunt
Sunday, November 7	Bedford County Hunt <i>Hunter Pace</i> , Huddleston
Sunday, November 7	Farmington Hunt <i>Hunter Pace</i> at Overstreets

9. The Rockbridge Hunt NewsHound is archived on the RH website under Newsletters in the Archive section. You can also access copies by logging into Google or Google Groups and read stuff from the Friends list. If you don't have a Google account, it's easy to create one using the same email address that you use for the Friends list.

As always, if you have feedback or suggestions for the Executive Committee, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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2020-2021**

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