



The Ernest Cook Trust

Trail Hunting Policy

The Ernest Cook Trust (ECT) offers children and young people, their families and communities, the chance to learn from the land by experiencing it first-hand. We inspire love and understanding of the natural world, farming and sustainability. ECT owns and manages 10 estates across Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Oxfordshire and Dorset, totalling 22,500 acres of land. We seek to be professional, progressive and supportive landlords. The Trust's Deed outlines that, in line with the wishes of founder Ernest Cook, Trustees should have regard to the encouragement of country sports and this commitment is respected, where practicable and lawful in the context of modern, responsible estate management. This policy does not apply to the Hatherop Estate where Hunting is expressly forbidden under the terms of its acquisition in 1997.

1 Legal Framework

The hunting of wild mammals with dogs was banned in England and Wales by the Hunting Act of 2004 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/37/contents>.

The law does allow what is known as 'trail hunting' to continue. This activity involves people on foot or horseback following a scent along a pre-determined route with hounds or beagles. It effectively replicates a traditional hunt but without a fox being chased, injured or kill.

2 Our Policy

Anybody who uses our land must comply with the law. Trail hunting is permitted under licence on some ECT Estates, provided it is conducted under the regulations set out by the Hunting Act 2004 (as revised) and is compatible with our aims of education and conservation and with any restrictions passed with ownership of the land to ECT.

The right to permit (and licence) a hunt across land owned by ECT rests solely with ECT. However, this must have the endorsement of the relevant agricultural tenants, given the on-site practical considerations.

3 ECT 'in-hand' land

The land which ECT has retained 'in-hand' and not let is substantially woodland. Prior to agreeing to access to these areas for trail hunting the following will be considered:

- existing or anticipated educational activities. the potential damage that may occur as a result
- forestry and deer management

- other sporting interests
- the views of adjoining landowners, tenants, or lessees

This list is not exhaustive and site specific considerations will be taken into account.

4 Licence Agreement

A Licence is required for each hunt, renewed annually, subject to strict conditions including, but not limited to:

- The provision of a meet card (or similar) highlighting dates when the Hunt is likely to cross ECT land. Due to its sensitive nature, ECT will retain this information as private and confidential, and for internal use only.
- Prior agreement by the relevant agricultural tenants.
- Hounds should always be under control.
- Artificial or animal-based scent can be used for trail laying in accordance with the legislation.
- All Masters must know the location of the laid trail in order for them to be able to call hounds off should they have strayed off the set trail.
- All areas in which trails will be laid must be agreed with ECT and the agricultural tenant where appropriate. ECT reserves the right to ask for proposed trails to be highlighted on a plan, and agreed, prior to each season.
- All public rights of way and related access must remain open and free to access for all.
- Access for vehicles and quad bikes must be agreed with the relevant agricultural tenant and the ECT (on in-hand land) at least 48 hours before a Hunt meet.
- ECT reserves the right to withdraw a licence at any time if ECT considers that the terms of the Licence have been broken.
- Woodland used for education will be excluded, unless prior written consent has been provided by ECT.
- Ad hoc monitoring undertaken by, or on behalf of ECT.

5. Trail Hunting Days

On a Trail Hunt day, as a minimum ECT will expect:

- Any fence/boundary repairs to be completed on the day of damage unless alternative arrangements have been discussed and agreed with the relevant agricultural tenant, or ECT (where land is in-hand).
- All Hunt staff to have been briefed thoroughly prior to each hunt day, to ensure no land is crossed where permission has not been granted.
- The Field to be briefed at each Meet to identify land which must not be crossed and responsibility must be taken by Masters to ensure ALL riders in the Field (including those at the back) adhere to the Licence Agreement and the terms therein.
- Should anti-hunt protestors be present, a diplomatic and professional approach should be taken and the Hunt and ECT must not be brought into disrepute.
- Repeated aggressive or confrontational behaviour will result in the Licence being withdrawn.
- Full transparency and access to Hunt Meets, and/or related activities on land owned by ECT.

Approved by Trustees at their meeting on 20 March 2020 – published September 2020.