



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Consultation on Proposals to Prohibit Trail Hunting in England and Wales

26 March 2026

We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment. We aim to grow a green economy and sustain thriving rural communities. We also support our world-leading food, farming and fishing industries.

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This publication is available at www.gov.uk/defra

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at TrailHuntingConsultation@defra.gov.uk

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Introduction

About this consultation

In line with the commitment in the 2024 Labour Party Manifesto, the government intends to ban trail hunting in England and Wales.

Trail hunting is an activity which has grown in popularity following the enactment of the Hunting Act in 2004 as an alternative to hunting wild mammals. It entails laying an animal-based scent trail for dogs to follow. This carries an inherent risk of the dogs picking up the scent of a live wild mammal and then pursuing it, instead of keeping to the laid trail. In addition, concerns persist that trail hunting can be used as a “smokescreen” to facilitate illegal hunting as it helps to obscure any intention to hunt wild mammals with dogs.

In view of these concerns, the government intends to bring in a ban on trail hunting in England and Wales. The government does not intend this ban to extend to other forms of activity such as drag hunting or ‘clean boot hunting’ which would therefore remain lawful.

We consider that an effective ban on trail hunting would require primary legislation. This consultation invites views on our proposed approach to legislating, and any on community, social, business, economic or environmental impacts potentially associated with a ban and how it is brought into effect. We welcome views from the public, landowners, conservation organisations, animal welfare groups, hunt organisers, local authorities, businesses and their representatives and any other interested parties.

The government will use the feedback provided by this consultation to inform the subsequent development of the necessary legislation.

This consultation is being conducted by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

A summary of the responses to this consultation will be published in due course.

Territorial extent and application

The UK government considers that the proposed legislation would relate to reserved matters set out in Schedule 7A to the Government of Wales Act 2006, including the reserved matter of ‘Hunting with dogs’. We are therefore consulting on proposals to ban trail hunting in Wales, as well as in England.

Background to the consultation

The Hunting Act 2004 made it an offence to hunt wild mammals with dogs in England and Wales, subject to some exemptions. Following the introduction of that Act, trail hunting grew in popularity as an alternative to hunting wild mammals with dogs. Trail hunting aims to mimic a traditional hunt by laying an animal scent trail which simulates the natural movement of wild mammals through hedgerows, woods, and ditches for hounds and hunts to follow. The trail hunting season starts in the autumn and continues throughout the winter, with most hunts finishing during March.

Trail hunting has become a focus of concern because, by its very nature, it is difficult to ensure that wild mammals such as foxes are not placed in danger. It involves the laying of a trail using an animal-based scent for the dogs to follow. The trail is not always laid constantly but may be lifted for a distance and dropped again to allow the hounds to search for the scent. Huntsmen and followers often do not know where trails have been laid. This can result in the scent of a live wild animal being picked up. Once picked up by the hounds, the hounds may start to pursue the wild mammal rather than follow the intended trail, with the hunt in fact pursuing the wild mammal. If the hounds are successful in their pursuit, this will inevitably lead to the death of, or injury to, the wild mammal.

The government therefore proposes to introduce legislation to ban trail hunting in England and Wales to ensure that wild mammals are not pursued and placed in danger as a result of trail hunting, to prevent trail hunting being used to avoid criminal liability for hunting with dogs and to support effective enforcement of the law against hunting with dogs.

Our proposals

This consultation seeks views on how an effective ban on trail hunting might best be accomplished, including with regard to:

- How trail hunting should be defined for the purposes of a ban
- How to ensure that the ban on trail hunting will not inadvertently affect other activities which we intend should remain lawful such as drag hunting or 'clean boot' hunting
- Whether it should remain lawful to use animal-based scent trails when training dogs for specific purposes
- Considerations relevant to the timing of introducing the ban
- The potential community, social, business, economic and environmental impacts of the proposed approach to banning trail hunting

The specific questions in Part 2 provide the opportunity to comment on these issues and shape the proposed approach to legislation.

Responding to the consultation

This is a public consultation, and we welcome all views. We are particularly keen to seek the views of all those who might potentially be affected by the proposed legislation including from:

- members of the public
- landowners and land managers
- conservation organisations
- animal welfare groups
- hunt organisers and participants
- local authorities

How to respond

The easiest way to respond is through the Citizen Space platform:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/defra/trail-hunting-consultation>

If you are unable to use Citizen Space, you can download the consultation documents and return your response via email to TrailHuntingConsultation@defra.gov.uk

A paper copy can be returned to us by sending it to:

Trail Hunting Team,
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs,
2 Marsham Street,
First Floor,
Seacole Building,
London,
SW1P 4DF

If responding by email or post, please state:

- your name
- your email address
- your organisation
- the consultation title

This consultation will run for 12 weeks. This consultation opens on 26 March 2026 and closes at 11.59 pm on 18 June 2026.

Responses received after the consultation closing date and time will not be analysed.

Question 29 explains how to send us separately any additional material which cannot be accommodated in the space for answers in this form.

This consultation is also available in Welsh through the Citizen Space platform.

Confidentiality and data protection

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the Government website at: www.gov.uk/defra. An annex to the consultation summary will list all organisations that responded but will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details.

There may be occasions when Defra will share the information you provide in response to the consultation, including any personal data, with external analysts. This is for the purposes of consultation response analysis and provision of a report of the summary of responses only. Please find our latest privacy notice uploaded as a related document alongside our consultation documents. If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to: consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk

Q1 in the consultation questions below asks whether you would like your response to be confidential. The answer you give will help us respond to any access for information request in relation to this consultation. If you respond 'Yes' in response to the question, you are asked to state clearly what information you would like to be kept confidential and explain your reasons for confidentiality. The reason for this is that information in responses to this consultation may be subject to release to the public or other parties in accordance with the access to information law (these are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information

to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances. In view of this, your explanation of your reasons for requesting confidentiality would help us balance these obligations for disclosure against any obligation of confidentiality. If we receive a request for the information that you have provided in your response to this consultation, we will take full account of your reasons for requesting confidentiality of your response, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

If you respond 'No' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, we will be able to release the content of your response to the public, but we won't make your personal name and private contact details publicly available.

Other Information

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office "Consultation Principles" which can be found at: [Microsoft Word - Consultation Principles \(1\).docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Next steps

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the UK government website on the Defra homepage.

Following careful consideration of all responses to this consultation, we plan to develop legislation to deliver a ban on trail hunting in England and Wales, to be introduced when parliamentary time allows.

Policy proposals and consultation questions

About you

These questions allow us to understand who is responding to this consultation and carry out data analysis. Please note that answers to some questions are required – in those cases, this will be clearly stated. If you do not answer all questions marked 'required' your responses to this consultation will not be considered.

How we use your personal data is set out in the consultation and call for evidence exercise privacy notice which can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defras-consultations-and-call-for-evidence-exercises-privacy-notice>

Question 1: Would you like your response to this consultation to be confidential in the event of an access to information request (see confidentiality and data protection above)? (required)

Please select one option only

- Yes
- No

If you answered 'Yes' please give your reason(s).

Question 2: Provide your full name (required)

If you are representing an organisation or group, you will be asked its name later (see Question 5)

Claire Wright

Question 3: Provide your email address or, alternatively, your full postal address (required)

If you do not have an email address, please provide a full postal address including postcode

Claire.wright@cla.org.uk

Question 4: In what capacity are you completing this consultation? (required)

- as an individual
- as a landowner or land manager
- as a farmer
- as a business
- as a representative of a hunt or as a hunt organiser or participant
- as a representative of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or other non-profit public interest group
- as a representative of a local community
- as a representative of an interest group which is not classified as an NGO or other non-profit public interest group
- as an elected representative
- as the representative of a public body (eg local authority; National Park Authority)
- as an academic or researcher
- other (please specify):

Question 5: If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, what is the name of that organisation? (required)

Country Land & Business Association

16 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PQ

Question 6: This consultation is for proposals that would apply only in England and Wales. Where are you, or the organisation you are representing, located? (required)

- England
- Wales
- Other

If you answered 'other', please specify in the box below

England and Wales

Proposed Legislative Approach

The questions in this section ask for your views on our proposed approach to legislating to ban trail hunting in England and Wales and any potential impacts which would need to be taken into consideration. You are free to choose whether to answer each question except where it is clearly stated that an answer is required.

For the purposes of the legislation, we propose to use the following definition of “trail hunting”:

“Trail hunting” is the activity in which a dog is directed to find and follow an animal-based scent which has been laid for that purpose. “Animal-based scent” means: a scent which is derived from a wild mammal, or a scent which mimics, replicates or resembles the scent of a wild mammal (or which is designed to do so), whether or not that scent is derived wholly or in part from artificial ingredients.

Question 7: Do you agree with this proposed definition of “trail hunting”?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain your reasons including, if applicable, your preferred definition of “trail hunting”.

This is an accurate description of trail hunting activity

Our proposed ban on trail hunting would mean that it would be an offence to engage or participate in trail hunting. We also intend to include offences for conduct which would assist unlawful trail hunting to take place.

Question 8: What types of conduct should be covered by ‘engagement’ or ‘participation’ in trail hunting?

The proposed ban appears unnecessary and insufficiently justified. In particular, we are concerned that offences relating to “engagement” or “participation” could be drafted too broadly, and capture individuals whose involvement is limited to mere presence in the vicinity of activities.

Feedback from our land manager members on this aspect of the proposed ban on trail hunting has been notably strong. Members have raised specific concerns that, if a trail hunt were to stray onto their land, they could be placed at risk of committing an offence simply by being present while taking steps to require the hunt to leave their property. This raises the unintended consequence that landowners or managers acting to protect their property rights could themselves be exposed to potential liability for “engagement” in trail hunting.

We therefore consider it essential that any legislation clearly distinguishes between active participation and incidental presence, and provides appropriate safeguards for landowners and managers acting in good faith.

Question 9: In relation to offences or conduct which would assist unlawful trail hunting to take place, we intend that it should be an offence for the owner or occupier of land to knowingly cause or permit another person to engage or participate in trail hunting on that land. Do you agree?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer

We consider the proposed ban on trail hunting to be unjustified and do not support the creation of any additional secondary offences.

The introduction of such offences risks creating unintended and disproportionate consequences for lawful rural activities. In particular, land managers may become reluctant to grant permission for equestrian, canine, or other legitimate land-based activities, regardless of their legality, due to concerns about potential liability arising from secondary offences.

This could have a chilling effect on a wide range of established and lawful practices, ultimately leading to reduced access and opportunities for these activities, and negatively impacting rural businesses and land management operations. This would also potentially be detrimental to deer management activities as farmers may restrict permissions for deer control on their land out of fear of being caught under these new offences.

Question 10: In relation to offences or conduct which would assist unlawful trail hunting to take place, we intend that it should be an offence for the owner or person responsible for a dog to knowingly cause or permit another person to use the dog for trail hunting. Do you agree?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer

We do not support the proposed ban, which we consider to be unnecessary and unjustified. In particular, the introduction of new secondary offences risks broadening the scope and impact of the ban in ways that extend beyond its intended purpose. This may have unintended consequences for other lawful countryside activities, including equestrian sports, drag hunting, and the exercising of dogs.

We note that a range of existing common law offences already exists and could be relied upon to support enforcement, without the need to introduce additional, potentially complex and contentious offences.

Furthermore, the ownership and management structures associated with trail hunting hounds are significantly more complex than those relating to domestic dog ownership. The creation of an offence of permitting a third party to use a dog for trail hunting would therefore be difficult to apply in practice, as it may be unclear where responsibility lies. For example, responsibility could potentially rest with the Masters, who have overall oversight of the pack;

the hunt committee, which may hold ownership; or the kennel huntsman and staff responsible for the day-to-day care of the hounds. This lack of clarity risks creating uncertainty and difficulty in enforcement.

Question 11: Are there any other forms of conduct which should be considered as possible offences in relation to offences or conduct which would assist unlawful trail hunting to take place?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer

No further comments

Question 12: Do you consider that any other legislative changes are necessary to ensure that a ban on trail hunting is effective?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer

We do not support the creation of any new offences, as this would place additional pressure on already stretched local police resources.

Existing legislation is sufficient to investigate and prosecute unlawful activity carried out under the guise of trail hunting, without the need to introduce further offences. The creation of new provisions would therefore risk duplicating existing legal powers, while adding unnecessary complexity to enforcement.

We are aware that animal based scents, or scents which mimic animal based scents, are sometimes used to train dogs for specific purposes, other than trail hunting, such as pest control and vital deer management activity to prevent damage to crops and woodland plantations. There must be exemptions to cover such cases.

Question 13: Do you think that it is possible for dogs to be appropriately trained for specific purposes other than trail hunting without the use of either animal based scents or artificial scents which mimic an animal based scent?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if applicable, explain the circumstances where you think it necessary to continue to permit the use of such scents in training dogs.

If a ban were to be introduced, it would be essential to include an exemption permitting the use of animal-based scents, or synthetic scents that replicate animal-based scents, for the training of dogs. The importance of such an exemption has been recognised in other contexts and is critical for a range of legitimate and necessary activities, including the training of gun dogs, the use of dogs in wildlife management, and the tracking and retrieval of injured or wounded animals, particularly deer. This is therefore an important consideration in terms of animal welfare.

There is no viable alternative to the use of animal-based or equivalent synthetic scents for these purposes. Without such an exemption, there is a risk that the effectiveness of these activities would be significantly compromised.

More broadly, we maintain that the proposed ban is unnecessary and unjustified, and that the need for exemptions should not arise. Nevertheless, if such measures are pursued, full consideration must be given to the wider economic and social impacts. These effects would be felt across rural communities, with consequences extending beyond those directly involved in trail hunting to include the many individuals and businesses whose livelihoods depend on hunting-related activities and deer management.

Question 14: Do you think that it should remain lawful, in certain circumstances, for animal based scents, or scents which mimic animal based scents, to be used in training dogs for certain purposes?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if applicable, what training purposes should be permitted.

Yes. The ability to use animal-based scents, or scents which mimic animal-based scents, to train dogs is essential. The importance of allowing this has been recognised elsewhere and is essential for the training of gun dogs, the use of dogs in wildlife management, and the retrieval of injured or wounded animals, especially deer. It is therefore also important in terms of animal welfare. The proposed ban is unnecessary and unjustified and there should be no need to consider exemptions. The economic and social impacts will be felt across every rural constituency and there must be consideration given to these impacts on thousands of people, not just those who undertake trail hunting, but those who rely on hunting for their livelihoods.

We want to ensure that the legislation to ban trail hunting should not inadvertently affect other activities such as drag hunting or 'clean boot hunting' where they do not present the same risk to wild mammals as trail hunting.

Question 15: We understand that drag hunting is an equestrian sport where an artificial non-animal based scent trail, which does not mimic an animal based scent, is laid along a pre-determined route for hounds to follow. **Do you agree that this is an accurate description of drag hunting?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if you wish, propose a different description.

This is an accurate definition

Question 16: Do you think that there is a risk that dogs engaged in drag hunting will deviate from the pre-laid trail by the scent of a wild mammal and then pursue the wild mammal?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Dogs (including hounds) trained to follow either animal-based or artificial scent trails will, in the vast majority of cases, remain on the pre-laid line, particularly where established best practice is followed.

As with any activity involving dogs, it is recognised that the possibility of deviation, including the pursuit of a wild mammal, cannot be entirely eliminated. However, such instances are already addressed under existing legislation, and therefore do not justify the introduction of additional regulatory measures in this context.

Question 17: We understand 'clean boot' hunting is an activity where hounds hunt human runners who neither wear nor drag any form of artificial scent enhancement. **Do you agree that this is an accurate description of 'clean boot' hunting?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer and, if you wish, propose an alternative description:

This is an accurate description

Question 18: Do you think there is a risk that dogs engaged in clean boot hunting will deviate from their pursuit of human runners to the pursuit of wild mammals?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Dogs (including hounds) trained to follow either animal-based, human or artificial scent trails will, in the vast majority of cases, remain on the pre-laid line, particularly where established best practice is followed.

As with any activity involving dogs, it is recognised that the possibility of deviation, including the pursuit of a wild mammal, cannot be entirely eliminated. However, such instances are already addressed under existing legislation, and therefore do not justify the introduction of additional regulatory measures in this context.

Question 19: Do you think that a new law to ban trail hunting would need to include any additional provisions in relation to drag hunting or clean boot hunting?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

No further comment.

Question 20: Are there any equestrian activities other than drag hunting, for example point to pointing, which you think are at risk from being affected by the proposed ban on trail hunting?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

The wider equine sector generates around £9 billion a year for the rural economy¹, one of the largest contributors. The racing industry contributes £4 billion of this £9 billion² to the UK economy. Trail hunts support racing at grass roots level by organising around 127³ Point to Point races per annum at 77 different courses. Many of these also include pony racing events on the flat for Pony Club members aged between 9 and 17. Point to Points therefore

¹ British Horse Council, 2024

² <https://www.britishequestrian.org.uk/news/british-equestrian-releases-state-of-the-nation-2024-report>

³ https://point-to-point-production.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/news_article/attachment/5869/2025-26_Final_Draft_Fixture_list.pdf

act as a nursery for jockeys who often go on to ride as professionals either flat racing or more frequently jump racing

Question 21: How do you think the introduction of a ban on trail hunting will affect dogs used for trail hunting? For example, will they be able to be re-directed to other activities?

The impact on over 12,000 dogs (hounds) that have been trained to trail hunt cannot be overstated. Dogs (hounds) cannot just be re-purposed to some other activity. These dogs (hounds) are pack animals and are used to living and working together and would be hard to domesticate. By banning trail hunting there are few options to redirect hound activity which would meet the needs of those dogs. It is notable that the Animal Welfare Act 2006 states that the needs of an animal include "its need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns" and "any need it has to be housed with, or apart from, other animals". Any proposed legislation must take account of this and ensure that hound welfare is taken into consideration.

Commented [JH1]: For my own education, why are you qualifying in this way throughout?

Commented [CW2R1]: The consultation document uses the term dogs throughout. Whilst dogs are used for hunting they are referred to usually as hounds in a trail hunting context.

Question 22: Do you think that there should be a transition period following the introduction of a ban on trail hunting and if so, how long should that period be?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

We consider the proposed ban to be unnecessary and unjustified. Accordingly, there should be no need to consider the introduction of any transition period. In our view, no length of transition would adequately mitigate the significant economic and social impacts of the proposed ban, nor address the potential consequences for the estimated 12,000 hounds affected by this proposal.

However, if a ban is to be introduced, it is essential that it does not take effect partway through an established trail hunting season. Sufficient time must be allowed to enable appropriate transition measures, including the retraining or rehoming of hounds, in light of the profound implications for their future, as well as for horses, associated businesses, and individuals.

Consideration must also be given to enforcement. Police forces would require time to plan and reallocate already limited resources, potentially diverting them from other priorities, in order to implement and enforce the proposed measures effectively.

Community and Social Impacts

This section invites your views on how the proposed legislation might affect people and communities.

Question 23: Do you think that the proposed legislation to ban trail hunting in England and Wales will affect people and/or communities more widely?

- Yes
- No

- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer including, if applicable, which groups of people/communities could be affected and in what way.

Something that is difficult to measure in monetary terms is the contribution that trail hunting activity makes to social and community cohesion. Trail, drag and clean boot hunting are activities mainly carried out during the winter months. This combined with the varied range of social events from Point-to-Point races to skittles matches and pub social evenings to hunt balls do much to combat loneliness and isolation within rural communities.

Business and economic impacts

Your answers to the following questions will help us to understand the possible business and economic impacts of introducing a ban on trail hunting.

Question 24: How do you think the proposed ban on trail hunting might affect the income and activities of the hunts currently involved in this activity?

A ban on trail hunting is unnecessary and unjustified. As the consultation document acknowledges, it is an activity that is “an alternative to hunting wild mammals” that has “grown in popularity” and does not involve wild mammals. The loss of trail hunting will have a profound impact on hunt numbers and may leave hunts financially unviable. We would note again that this consultation fails to recognise that trail hunting is not just an equestrian activity but is also undertaken by foot packs. It is also attractive to those who follow, whether on foot or by car, and who enjoy watching hounds working.

Question 25: How do you think the proposed ban on trail hunting might affect the income and activities of businesses directly linked with hunts which currently engage in trail hunting?

The wider equine sector generates around £9 billion a year for the rural economy⁴, one of the largest contributors. The equine sector is also closely linked with other sectors of the economy. Whilst the contribution of trail hunting to that figure is relatively small (estimates range from £100 million⁵ to £170 million⁶), hunting often supports jobs in remoter regions where employment opportunities are fewer.

The equine sector as a whole is the second largest rural employer. Whilst those employed in trail hunting are a small part of that total estimates by the Countryside Alliance suggest that it still supports 800-900 jobs (FTE)⁷.

Trail hunting sits at the heart of a web of businesses that supply the hunt and those that support and follow trail hunting. These include publicans, charities, farriers, saddlers, vets and feed merchants. For example, many farmers rely on hunts to collect fallen stock, which if trail hunting is banned, would see a significant increase in cost to those affected farmers at a time when they are facing rapidly increasing cost pressures. It is not clear that all farms would be able to access fallen stock provision at a viable price without recourse to the local hunt kennels, particularly those in more remote areas.

Many charities also benefit from the support of the trail hunting community.

Question 26: Do you think that the proposed ban on trail hunting in England and Wales might affect other businesses not directly linked with hunts?

- Yes
- No

⁴ British Horse Council, 2024

⁵ British Hound Sports Association, 2025

⁶ Burns Report, 2000 (figures adjusted for inflation)

⁷ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2026/04/12/labour-trail-hunting-ban-risks-1000-jobs/>

- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer including, if appropriate, which types of businesses you think might be affected and how.

The wider equine sector generates around £9 billion a year for the rural economy⁸, one of the largest contributors. The equine sector is also closely linked with other sectors of the economy. Whilst the contribution of trail hunting to that figure is relatively small (estimates range from £100 million⁹ to £170 million¹⁰), hunting often supports jobs in remoter regions where employment opportunities are fewer.

The equine sector as a whole is the second largest rural employer. Whilst those employed in trail hunting are a small part of that total estimates by the Countryside Alliance suggest that it still supports 800-900 jobs (FTE)¹¹.

Trail hunting sits at the heart of a web of businesses that supply the hunt and those that support and follow trail hunting. These include publicans, charities, farriers, saddlers, vets and feed merchants. For example, many farmers rely on hunts to collect fallen stock, which if trail hunting is banned, would see a significant increase in cost to those affected farmers at a time when they are facing rapidly increasing cost pressures. Many charities also benefit from the support of the trail hunting community.

Furthermore many packs of hounds still operate a fallen stock service which benefits livestock businesses by disposing of injured or sick animals that cannot enter the food chain through conventional methods. These services either run on a 'pay per animal' basis for small holders or a subscription basis for those who will have multiple animals per annum. This offers a cheaper alternative to using commercial knacker services to dispose of casualty animals. The fallen stock is butchered at the kennels and either fed to hounds, incinerated or taken away by a commercial renderer.

Environmental impacts

Question 27: How do you think that the proposed ban on trail hunting could affect the environment or wildlife?

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Unless dogs can be trained using animal-based scents, or those which mimic animal-based scents, it will become impossible to train dogs used in environmental species management – scent dogs can be used to detect hedgehogs, pine martens, water voles and the carcasses of bats and birds; for wider land management such as following up injured or wounded animals, especially deer, and for shooting. There would be serious implications for animal welfare, biodiversity and nature recovery. Particularly given the ambitious government intention to increase woodland creation across England and Wales. Young trees are vulnerable to deer damage.

The hunting community plays a proactive part in the stewardship of the countryside and this ban puts at risk that organised volunteer activity.

⁸ British Horse Council, 2024

⁹ British Hound Sports Association, 2025

¹⁰ Burns Report, 2000 (figures adjusted for inflation)

¹¹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2026/04/12/labour-trail-hunting-ban-risks-1000-jobs/>

Further Considerations

Question 28: Are there any other matters, including possible alternatives to primary legislation, which you feel should be taken into account in developing the legislation to ban trail hunting?

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

Please explain the reasons for your answer:

Data from the Ministry of Justice shows that between the 19 February 2005 (when the Hunting Act 2004 came into force) and 2025 there have been 1,075 prosecutions and 623 convictions. Approximately 8% of those convictions relate to registered packs of hounds regulated by either the British Hound Sports Association or the Masters of Draghounds & Bloodhounds Association.

The remaining convictions under the Hunting Act are attributed to hare and deer poaching activity which were already illegal under the Game Act 1873 but are commonly prosecuted under the Hunting Act 2004 because of greater police powers and the larger fines contained within this legislation.

There is not overwhelming evidence that trail hunting, drag hunting and clean boot hunting is being used as a cover for widespread illegality. We recognise that there have been issues with some packs which has cemented a view within Government that additional measures are required. However, legislation exists to tackle any pack who break the law. Legitimate trail, drag and clean boot hunts should not be tarred with the same brush. Better equipment, training and resourcing for rural crime teams to enforce the Hunting Act 2004 would be a more effective use of resources than entirely new legislation to ban all forms of mock hunting.

The Hunting Act 2004 already makes it an offence to pursue a wild mammal with dogs save when the activity is covered by one of the exemptions listed in Schedule One of the Act¹². It includes such things as searching for wild mammals, chasing them, or pursuing them with the intention of catching or killing them.

Upon conviction penalties for Hunting Act offences are a fine up to level 5 on the standard scale which is an unlimited fine for offences committed after the 13 March 2015. Additionally, the court may order the forfeiture of any dog, hunting article, or vehicle used in the commission of the offence.

Legislation already exists to tackle incidents of illegality related to hunting activity and no further legislative change is needed.

The CLA has long campaigned for rural crime teams and police call handlers to benefit from better training and better equipment. In our recent submission to the Spending Review consultation in 2025 we asked for Government to:

- Ensure annual rural training for all frontline police staff
- Ensuring that rural crime teams are properly resourced
- Recruit a Rural Crime Coordinator for each rural force

¹² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/37/schedules>

Enforcement of any new legislation will not see any additional financial settlement made to police forces. Given the stretched nature of rural policing creating additional offences would not represent an efficient use of resource.

Question 29: Is there any other evidence you would like us to consider?

If you wish to submit reports or other material which cannot be accommodated in the space for answers in this form you can send them to us separately either by email to TrailHuntingConsultation@defra.gov.uk or by post to Trail Hunting Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2 Marsham Street, First Floor, Seacole Building, London, SW1P 4DF to be received by no later than 11.59 pm on 18 June 2026. Please use the box below to tell us briefly what you are going to send and why.

No additional comments

Thank you for responding to this consultation.