

## **INTERESTED IN FOX HUNTING?**

At Woodbrook we want you to experience fox hunting before you spend money on clothing and tack that you might not use again. Hopefully you and your horse (or mule) will fall in love with it as we have. To help the rider and horse decide if it is something you both want to continue doing, Woodbrook has created a trial period for riders and their horses that allows some flexibility with traditions. The information below is geared toward those who are trying out fox hunting to see if they want to pursue it further.

Typically, non-members are invited to a "Shakedown Hunt" geared towards green horses, green riders and those wanting to try out foxhunting. You may also participate in hound walks from the kennels, mounted hound exercises and pre-season training hunts as a non-member if you have a current Joint Base Lewis-McChord range pass, which we can help you obtain. The Shakedown Hunt is \$25.00 and hunt breakfast is \$10.00, there is no charge for hound exercises and hound walks and pre-season training hunts. You can extend trying foxhunting as a non-member for two more hunts during our formal season at a capping fee of \$50.00 per hunt, and after that, we hope you are hooked and join at our low membership rates! You can talk to either Melody Fleckenstein, MFH or membership chair Michelle Hoedeman for suggestions on how to move from the trial period to membership.

### **BASICS:**

1. We don't hunt foxes; the hounds follow a scent dragged by human runners. The hunt field (the riders) follow the hounds to enjoy watching the hounds work the scent.
2. There are three "flights" or groups at most hunts: first flight (think fast runners and jumpers), second flight (think horses loping or trotting and occasionally going over jumps), and hill toppers (the walk trot group that doesn't go over jumps). The hill topper group is a walk/trot group and goes only as fast as the slowest rider in the group feels comfortable going. It is not unusual for the hill topper group to be split into two different groups to better meet the comfort level of the riders.
3. Each group will have a Field Master (your new best friend) at the front and the back of the flight who helps guide the group and helps where needed. The Master or Field Masters will assign you to a group to ride after talking with you and meeting your horse. There is an opportunity part of the way through the hunt to change groups (move up or down in speed) with the Master's permission.
4. Except in rare situations all riders and horses new to fox hunting start out in the hill topper group and may remain in that group for a couple hunts to a couple years (or longer).
5. Western tack is allowed while riders are trying to decide if they like fox hunting, and even during the season for riders trying foxhunting for the first time. The hunt has informal and formal hunts, correct attire is described on the website, and you can phase into all the proper gear. Black tall boots or half-chaps and paddock boots and beige breeches and a dark coat and white shirt are correct once the season starts. Most riders arrive at the hunt club an hour before the hunt to tack up their horse/mule and generally socialize. At hunt time the hounds are released from the kennels and the group rides out onto Joint Base Lewis McChord. For the hill toppers about half of the time is spent walking along trails, through the woods, or over the native meadows to reach viewpoints to watch the hunt. The other half of the time is split between trotting along trails and sitting in the saddle at a view point to watch the hounds followed by the first and second flights. Most hunts are two to three hours long.
6. After the hunt the horses are blanketed and tied to the side of the trailers. The riders enjoy a "hunt breakfast" (tradition calls it breakfast but it is served sometime between 2 and 3 pm). The breakfast is usually in the clubhouse (on the National Parks Department's Register of Historic Places) which is a charming building that has served the club for over 90 years, has a roaring fireplace and is warm and dry!

7. The cost of riding in a hunt is either \$25 (Shakedown or other pre-season hunt) or \$50 for formal and informal hunts, and breakfast is \$10. You may cap twice during the formal season before joining. The money goes toward care of the hounds and upkeep of the buildings on the hunt property.
8. It is considered appropriate to ask the Master first if you may join any hunt (if you are not a member) by email at [woodbrookhuntclub@gmail.com](mailto:woodbrookhuntclub@gmail.com). If you are going with a member, the member is typically the person who contacts the Master to get permission for you to join the hunt and acts as your chaperone.

**DRESS:** Please be smartly turned out even if you don't wear the traditional "kit" (riding outfit) used in fox hunting for the formal season. Normally this means a black coat, black helmet, beige breeches, tall boots and a stock tie. If you don't have a black coat you might want to consider wearing a dark colored coat. If you don't have beige breeches how about lighter colored pants? If you don't have tall boots you might consider half chaps or even just cowboy boots. Stock ties were traditionally worn and then used to bandage up a horse's leg if it got cut in the field or a broken arm. Don't feel that you need to wear any kind of tie while you are trying out fox hunting. Women are encouraged to wear their hair in a way that looks neat. Traditionally hair nets were used to keep stray hair from straying and hair nets are usually worn during formal hunts.

**YOUR HORSE AND TACK:** Your horse should be smartly turned out and your tack clean. Many of our fox hunting members come from a western tradition of trail riding or working cattle. It is normal for riders trying out hunting to ride in a western saddle and tack during the trial period. We want both you and your horse to be comfortable and safe. In fox hunting heavy decoration on tack is not encouraged so if you have a choice between a plain saddle and a show saddle, use the plain saddle and tack. Bits (or hackamores) should be whatever it takes to control the horse. Typically saddle blankets are clean white pads but while trying out fox hunting use a saddle blanket or pad that works with your saddle, but please no bright colors.

**WHAT DOES IT COST?:** The "fee" to ride varies based on the event with formal hunts having a "capping" fee of \$50, Shakedown Hunt having a capping fee of \$25, and hound exercises and hound walks and pre-season training hunts having no fee. Hunts traditionally have a meal served after the hunt. Regardless of the time of day or the type of food served, the meal is always called "breakfast." Breakfast is a \$10 donation that goes toward feed and care of the hounds.

**START TIME:** Be prompt. Call ahead to be sure you know the start time and starting location of the meet, we do trailer out to various "fixtures" or locations, sometimes on JBLM, sometimes other areas. Arrive in time to ensure that you and your horse are properly turned out, have time to pay your capping fee and can be introduced to the Masters and Field Master. If you are late, it's not appropriate to try to find the hunt by going across country on your own. Many people arrive a full hour prior to the scheduled time of the hunt. This allows a calm pace to get ready and time to socialize.

**BEFORE THE HUNT:** You will need to pay a capping fee and sign a release (if you are not a member) prior to the hunt starting. (You pay for breakfast after the hunt.) Ask the other people around you to identify who is collecting the money (the Field Secretary). Please make yourself known to the Field Secretary, pay the capping fee and sign a release, prior to mounting your horse. If you have already signed a release form for the current season (available on the website) and have no fees due, a cordial good morning will suffice.

**ETIQUETTE:** The members of the field (the riders) will be told who is the Field Master (the person to follow) for the day. You must at all times stay behind the Field Master, unless you are told to go on.

**NOT ALL HUNTS HAVE THE SAME FORMALITY**

Not all fox hunts have the same traditions of dress for the rider and tack for the horse. Some of the more formal hunts include Opening Day, Blessing of the Hounds, Boxing Day Hunt, New Year's Hunt, and Closing Hunt. For these hunts, it is important to dress as close to the traditional kit as you can. It is common for riders to braid their horse's mane to ride in the more formal hunts.

Other hunts are less formal. The less formal hunts are announced in the hunt schedule that is published each month called a Fixture Card, and traditional "Ratcatcher" attire is appropriate. While the rider and horse are still expected to "look sharp" additional flexibility is allowed during these hunts. The Shake Down Hunt (the first pre-season hunt) is traditionally a time for people new to fox hunting, horses new to fox hunting, or new to both. Check in with the hunt master (Melody Fleckenstein, MFH) if you have questions about appropriate attire.

In addition to fox hunts Woodbrook also has hound exercise rides, three to four Hunter Paces, and a once a year for all the family Hunter Trials Horse Show (with the final Hunter Pace).

- Hound exercise rides (typically two to three times a week) are shorter rides (around 45 minutes to one hour) riding with the hounds through the woods and fields at a walk and trot, this is for "legging up" the hounds and horses pre-season. There is no traditional kit for hound exercise rides, just that you and your horse arrive looking neat and clean.
- Hunter Pace is a competition (with metals and ribbons) held a couple times a year in which riders are timed riding a pre-set trail course. The "winners" are the riders who come closest to the Master's time through the course. The riders are encouraged to dress sharp but the kit doesn't have to be formal, and you are not required to jump. You ride in teams with friends or we find a team for you!
- The Hunter Trials Horse Show is a family-friendly day of classes including classes for kids and ponies, for teams and pairs jumping, flat classes and handy hunters and field hunters, which show off the skills used in the hunt field. The riders are expected to dress in English riding kit and tack.

#### **GETTING THERE:**

- The hunt club house address is 6206 150th St. SW, Lakewood, WA 98439
- Most people arrive to the hunt club by taking exit 123 (Thorne Lane) off Interstate 5 and head east. The road becomes 150<sup>th</sup> St SW after the round-about. Keep driving past the stop sign. The driveway is on your right but it is hidden by big tree trunks. We have painted the tree trunks white to help you find the driveway.
- The speed limit on the club's property is 5 mph. Please honor that speed.
- The driveway goes to the back of the property and takes a right turn. Continue to follow the driveway past the red sheds and hound runs and drive through the next gate.
- You will see the red club house on your right. Please park your rig on the left side of the driveway – not in front of the club house. Park your rig so that the front of your truck is facing the club house. It is okay to park on the grass on the left side of the driveway. The clubhouse has bathrooms, a kitchen, faucet for horse/dog water outside, cable tv and internet for your non-riding friends or spouses/kids.

#### **COMING FROM OUT OF TOWN:**

1. There are accommodations available for both you and your horse, although we are better set up for horses than we are people, but people can stay in the clubhouse, park campers outside and there are local motels in Lakewood and Spanaway.
  - a. Stall option #1 – Horseland Farm may have overnight stabling, contact Jenn at [starfirefarm@comcast.net](mailto:starfirefarm@comcast.net)
  - b. Stall option #2 – Woodbrook Stables may have overnight stabling, contact Kerry at [riverrunfarm@hotmail.com](mailto:riverrunfarm@hotmail.com)

- c. Stall option #3 – Your horses can stay at your trailer, we have a limited number of day stalls available.
2. You are welcome to park your camper/living quarters in the hunt club's parking lot. A parking fee of \$10. includes use of the facilities. But you must be pre-cleared by Jenn Hansen our huntsman first, email her at [starfirefarm@comcast.net](mailto:starfirefarm@comcast.net).

**Most importantly, have fun!**