# Fox hunting in Scotland persists despite toughest UK ban as loopholes exploited



A new report by the League Against Cruel Sports has indicated that fox hunting in Scotland persists, despite the implementation of strengthened legislation aimed at prohibiting the practice. The Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Act 2023, described as 'the UK's strongest anti-fox hunting legislation', came into effect two years ago; however, the report highlights the continued exploitation of legal loopholes by some huntsmen.

The League's research acknowledges that the new law has had a tangible impact, leading to a reduction in the number of active hunts, with nearly half having ceased operations since the act was introduced. Robbie Marsland, Director of Scotland and Northern Ireland for the League, noted that, while significant progress has been made, reports of huntsmen attempting to circumvent the law are alarming. “During the passage of the Bill, ministers were clear that hunting with dogs has 'no place in modern Scotland'," Marsland stated, emphasising the expectation for a rigorous licensing scheme. Despite this, over 60 licenses have been issued in the past season, which Marsland criticises as becoming routine rather than exceptional.

Examples of the misuse of these licenses include the Lauderdale Hunt, which allegedly made a 100-mile trip to pursue foxes in Renfrewshire under the guise of legal activity. Similarly, the Dumfriesshire and Stewartry Foxhounds have been noted for using the licensing system to conduct hunts earlier this year. This hunt has now disbanded, becoming the fourth of Scotland’s ten established hunts to do so since the new law took effect.

Marsland also raised concerns surrounding ongoing police investigations into four hunts for suspected illegal activities, revealing that some were operating under NatureScot licenses at the time. Emma Slawinski, Chief Executive of the League Against Cruel Sports, expressed optimism that continued political will and proper enforcement could eradicate fox hunting in Scotland.

NatureScot, the body responsible for evaluating hunting licenses, has stated it is committed to upholding the Hunting with Dogs Act. Liz McLachlan, NatureScot's Licensing Manager, responded to concerns by asserting that the organisation rigorously assesses all applications to ensure compliance with legal standards. She acknowledged awareness of reports involving illegal hunting and confirmed active collaboration with stakeholders, including Police Scotland, to monitor compliance.

Despite the controversies surrounding fox hunting and the ongoing efforts to enforce the new laws, both the League Against Cruel Sports and NatureScot remain focused on the appropriate management of Scotland's wildlife and the future of hunting regulations in the region.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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3. <https://www.league.org.uk/what-we-do/scotland-campaigns/scotland-end-fox-hunting/> - The League Against Cruel Sports Scotland's campaign page, highlighting their efforts in securing the new legislation to close loopholes that allowed fox hunting to continue in Scotland.
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6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/25/animal-activists-hail-holyrood-move-to-firm-up-anti-hunting-laws> - An article from The Guardian reporting on the Scottish Parliament's decision to toughen anti-hunting laws, including the passing of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill and its implications for fox hunting in Scotland.
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