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Calls to scrap 'derided' hunt ban

Hunt supporters are calling for the ban on hunting with foxes to be repealed as they prepare to mark one year since the law was brought in.



There are fears the ban is being evaded by huntspeople

The Countryside Alliance described the legislation as "derided, discredited and damaged beyond repair".

Alliance leader Simon Hart said flaws in the law allowed huntspeople to keep their lifestyle intact.

But animal welfare groups and ministers praised the law, saying there were no loopholes or grey areas.

Hunting foxes with dogs was made illegal in England and Wales under the Hunting Act last February, but hounds can be used to follow a scent and to flush out a fox.

Foxes can still be shot, or killed by birds of prey after being tracked by a pair of hounds.

The League Against Cruel Sports has sent the names of 33 hunts accused of repeatedly breaching the law to police chiefs in England and Wales.

HUNTING ACT 2004

- It is an offence to hunt a wild mammal with a dog
Some forms of hunting are exempt including:
Using no more than two dogs to flush out a mammal to be shot
Flushing a mammal from cover in connection with falconry
It is a defence to believe that the hunting was exempt

A spokeswoman for the Department of the Environment, Food and Regional Affairs (Defra) said the Act was "clear and simple".

"But, as is common with new legislation, there is no shortage of people with ideas about how the law might be evaded," she said.

Rural Affairs Minister Jim Knight told the BBC he was glad a countryside tradition like hunting was continuing to flourish despite the ban.

Quote: I'm delighted that there are lots of people going out and enjoying themselves in the countryside. Rural Affairs Minister Jim Knight

"We are happy with the way the law is working," he said.

"We are monitoring it carefully but I'm delighted that there are lots of people going out and enjoying themselves in the countryside."

The anniversary of the prohibition came as Countryside Alliance chairman Kate Hoey warned that more foxes were being killed now than when hunting was legal.

The Labour MP told the Daily Telegraph newspaper that the law was broken inadvertently as dogs continued to kill foxes.

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