

Trail hunting set to be banned

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Trail hunting is set to be banned in England and Wales - delivering a key manifesto commitment. A public consultation will open today on how to take the ban forward.

Trail hunting is where hounds follow a pre-laid animal-based scent across the countryside, mimicking traditional hunting. It became popular in the UK after the Hunting Act 2004 became law, as an alternative to traditional fox hunting.

This can result in wild animals, including foxes and hares, being injured or killed by dogs, as well as household pets in some cases. The nature of trail hunting makes it difficult to ensure wild animals are not placed in danger as a result of dogs picking up their scent, as opposed to the intended animal-based scent trail.

Concerns also persist around whether trail hunting is being used by some as a “smokescreen” to facilitate illegal hunting with dogs.

Assistant Chief Constable Matt Longman, who leads on hunting for the National Police Chiefs' Council, has previously said he believes trail hunting is providing a smokescreen and it “gives people the opportunity to carry on hunting - as they always said they would when the ban came in 20 years ago”

We want alternative practices such as drag hunting and clean-boot hunting, which use non-animal scents, to continue to thrive. We recognise that hunts can support jobs and local businesses, and bring people together across the countryside. We are committed to ensuring that responsible rural pursuits, where there is no risk to our precious wildlife, can continue.

Baroness Sue Hayman, Animal Welfare Minister, said:

We pledged to ban trail hunting in our manifesto and that is exactly what we intend to do.

The nature of trail hunting makes it difficult to ensure wild and domestic animals are not put at risk of being killed or injured - that is clearly unacceptable.

We understand that this is a complex issue and so we are seeking views from everyone with an interest to help shape how we bring this forward.

This announcement follows the publication of the Government's Animal Welfare Strategy which outlined the most ambitious reforms to animal welfare in a generation - improving the lives of millions of animals across the UK.

A public consultation will open today on how to take the ban forward. It will run until 18 June.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/trail-hunting-set-to-be-banned>