



LANDOWNER HANDBOOK

A Partnership in Country, Conservation, and Tradition

2026 | 2027 SEASON

*A traditional mounted fox hunt rooted in land stewardship,
horsemanship, and community across
Northeast Tennessee & Southwest Virginia*

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A LETTER TO OUR LANDOWNERS

Without you, there is no hunt

Dear Friend,

There is no polite or modest way to say it: every acre of country we ever hunt belongs to someone else. The Holston Hounds exists at the pleasure of the families and farms who open their gates to us. That is a debt we take seriously, and one we never intend to repay with anything less than the highest standard of stewardship, respect, and gratitude.

American foxhunting is, at its heart, a conservation tradition. The Masters of Foxhounds Association of North America reports that its 129 member hunts have stewarded more than 1.5 million acres of private land into active conservation use across the United States and Canada. The reason is simple — a hunt cannot operate without good country, and good country does not survive without good landowners. Our interests, in the long run, are perfectly aligned with yours: open land, healthy fields, working farms, and a rural way of life worth handing down.

This handbook is our way of putting that relationship in writing. It answers the questions landowners most often ask before opening their property to a hunt. It sets out what we offer to you in return for your generosity — practical help with your land, recognition within the hunt, and a standing invitation to every gathering we hold. It puts in writing the standards we hold ourselves to when we ride across your country, and the small things we ask of you so we can plan a season responsibly.

Above all, it formally welcomes you, with our deepest thanks, as an Honorary Landowner Member of the Holston Hounds — a designation that carries the full social privileges of the club, hunting privileges over your own land when included in our fixtures, and our standing invitation to every meal, meet, and gathering we hold throughout the season.

Whether or not you ever sit a horse with us, you are a member of this hunt in the truest sense of the word. You are the reason it exists.

With our deepest thanks,

**Russell Haynes, Honorary Huntsman
and the Masters of Holston Hounds**

HONORARY LANDOWNER MEMBER

A standing place at every gathering of the hunt

Every landowner who hosts a Holston Hounds fixture is automatically welcomed as an Honorary Landowner Member of the club, with our compliments and at no cost — ever. This is not a sponsorship tier, an annual ask, or a gesture that comes with a renewal notice. It is the permanent, lifetime acknowledgment that you are a partner in this club, not a patron of it.

WHAT YOUR HONORARY MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES

- ▶ Standing invitation to every hunt breakfast, tailgate, stirrup cup, and meet of the season
- ▶ Reserved seats at the Opening Meet, the Blessing of the Hounds, and the Annual Hunt Ball
- ▶ Full hunting privileges over your own land whenever it is included in a Holston Hounds fixture, at no charge
- ▶ Recognition by name in the annual Holston Hounds yearbook and on the club website
- ▶ A complimentary copy of the printed yearbook each season, mailed directly to you
- ▶ A certificate of liability insurance for your records, available on request
- ▶ A printed Fixture List in advance of every season, showing the dates and approximate locations of all scheduled hunts
- ▶ Year-round access to the Masters and Honorary Secretary as the first point of contact for any concern, question, or coordination need



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Honest answers to the questions every landowner asks

We have lifted the questions below from real conversations with landowners across the country and from the published landowner materials of long-established hunts. They are the questions you are likely wondering about — and we would rather answer them in writing, plainly, than have you wonder.

Am I liable if someone gets hurt on my property?

Both Tennessee and Virginia have recreational-use statutes that protect landowners from liability for injuries to people using their land for recreational purposes, including foxhunting. In Tennessee, that protection appears at Tenn. Code Ann. § 70-7-102, which lists "animal riding" among the protected uses; the Tennessee Supreme Court has held that the list is not exhaustive and similar activities are also covered. In Virginia, the protection appears at Va. Code § 29.1-509, which explicitly names "horseback riding" and "foxhunting" among the protected uses.

The core protection in both states is the same: a landowner who allows recreational use of their property owes no duty of care to keep the premises safe for that use, no duty to warn of hazards, and the recreational user is not considered an invitee or licensee to whom a duty of care is owed. Protection does not extend to gross negligence, willful or malicious conduct, or arrangements where the landowner charges a fee. Holston Hounds never pays a fee for the use of land, by design — both because we cannot afford to and because doing so would weaken the very protection these statutes provide you.

In addition, Holston Hounds carries general liability insurance covering hunt activities, and a certificate of insurance naming you as additional insured is available at any time at no cost — simply ask the Honorary Secretary, and it will be in your hands within the week. Every member and guest who rides with the hunt also signs a liability waiver before each season.

Will this affect my right to hunt game on my property, or anyone else's?

No. Many of our landowners are themselves deer, turkey, or upland-bird hunters, and we know that you care about your property and steward it precisely because you value it as habitat. Our hounds are trained only to hunt fox and coyote — they will not pursue deer, turkey, or other game.

We coordinate around your hunting schedule. We will work around your bow and muzzleloader seasons, and as a matter of safety we generally do not hunt at all during the high days of rifle season. If you tell us when your property will be in active game-hunting use, we will plan our fixtures around it without question.

Will this upset my livestock or hurt my crops?

No. Our hounds do not chase livestock of any kind, and our riders are trained to give livestock a wide berth, never separating animals from feed, water, or shelter. The Field Master leads the field around the edges of seeded fields and hay fields. We do not cross active row crops without your express, advance permission.

If your operation has specific concerns — calving season, weaning, rotational grazing, a sensitive pasture being rested — tell the Masters and we will adjust our fixture timing around it. If you ever see behavior in the field that goes against this, we want to hear about it. We would rather correct a member's behavior than lose your trust.

Will the hunt show up whenever it wants? Do I have a say?

We ride on your property only when invited to a fixture. Permission to hunt is not permission for individual members to enter your land at other times — to ride, hike, drive, scout, or otherwise visit. That rule is taken absolutely at the Holston Hounds, and any member who breaches it is subject to immediate consequence within the club.

As an Honorary Landowner Member you receive a printed Fixture List in advance of during the season showing where we plan to hunt and approximately when. If you would prefer that we not draw a particular date, or wish to suggest one we have not considered, simply tell the Masters. The schedule serves you, not the other way around.

How much land do you need? My place may be too small.

A traditional hunt typically needs at least 800 to 1000 contiguous acres of country to — but that figure almost never sits with a single landowner. In practice, we cross over multiple properties in the course of a single hunt, and your country, joined to your neighbor's and theirs, is exactly what makes the sport possible.

Even small parcels matter, often profoundly. A property in the right location can be the link between two larger pieces of country, the difference between a closed loop and an open one. And even a parcel we never hunt across — but on which you allow us to call our hounds out if they wander — is a meaningful gift to the club. There is no parcel too small to be useful, and no relationship too small to be valued.

Why should I open my property to the Holston Hounds?

We will not pretend the answer is the same for every landowner, but here are the reasons our partners most often give us. First, the hunt is a quiet, consistent ally in keeping country open. Foxhunters as a community vote, with their balance sheets and their lives, for the preservation of the rural landscape; the MFHA reports more than 1.5 million acres in active conservation use across its member hunts.

Second, the hunt looks after you in practical ways — see the next page for the specifics. Trail maintenance, creek crossings, fence and gate help, farming-question referrals, community introductions. We work to be a useful neighbor, not just a fortunate one.

Third, you become part of something. Hunt country is, in the words of one long-standing hunt, a "vibrant, vigilant neighborhood watch." You will know more of your neighbors, see more of your country, and find yourself invited to a great deal of good food.

And fourth, the simplest reason: the country was made for it. The fox has run these hills since long before any of us, and the chase across them, when it is done with care, is one of the oldest and most beautiful sights in American sport. You make that possible.

WHAT WE DO FOR YOU

Practical help and presence, year-round

A hunt-landowner relationship that is only about the hunt is not really a relationship. We try to be a useful neighbor — present in good times, available in bad, and quick to lend a hand when one is needed. The list below is the working definition of what that means at the Holston Hounds.

Trail maintenance and creek crossings. Members and staff help establish and maintain riding trails on your property when you wish, including clearing windfall, brushing back encroaching growth, and building or improving creek crossings. We bring our own tools, our own time, and a willingness to do the work the way you want it done.

Fencing, gates, and panels. When we panel a hedge, build a coop, or install a hunt gate on your property, the work is done exactly where you want it, exactly the way you want it, and inspected with you afterward. If a fence is damaged in the course of a hunt, it is repaired in the field where possible and reported to you immediately. The materials are our cost, never yours.

Farming and rural-life questions. Our membership includes farmers, large-animal veterinarians, fence builders, hay producers, equine professionals, real-estate professionals, and people who have spent their entire lives in this country. If you have a question — about a sick calf, a pasture problem, a contractor recommendation, a property line — chances are someone in the hunt either has the answer or knows who does. Ask us.

Community introductions. Foxhunting is a uniquely social sport, and the hunt season throws a lot of people together at breakfasts, tailgates, hound walks, and the annual Hunt Ball. As a new landowner you will meet your neighbors faster than you would on your own — and as an established one, you will see them more often.

Hound retrieval and communication. On the rare occasions when a hound wanders onto a property where we are not hunting that day, the Honorary Huntsman or staff will retrieve the hound promptly and quietly. By state law in both Tennessee and Virginia, hunt staff may enter a non-fixture property for the limited purpose of retrieving hounds; we will always call you first when we possibly can, and we will always let you know after the fact.

Help when you ask for it. If you need a hand moving cattle, putting up hay in a hurry before weather, or finding a horse that has gotten loose — call. We may not always be able to help, but we will always answer the phone, and we have more than once.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

How we conduct ourselves on your land

Hosting a hunt is an act of trust. The promises that follow are the operating standard of the Holston Hounds, expected of every member, guest, hound, horse, and hoof that crosses your property. Failure to uphold them is taken seriously by the Masters and is grounds for immediate consequence within the club.

Gates and Fences

Gates are returned to the exact condition in which they were found — closed gates closed, open gates open. Field Masters call out the disposition of every gate as it is reached, and a member is designated to confirm. If a fence is damaged in the course of a hunt, it is repaired in the field where possible and reported to the Masters and to you, the landowner, as quickly as we can reach you.

Crops and Livestock

We do not cross seeded fields, hay fields, or active row crops without your express permission, communicated through the Masters. Livestock are given a wide berth and are never separated from water, feed, or shelter by any action of the hunt. If your operation has specific concerns — calving season, weaning, sensitive pasture rotation — the Masters will work fixture timing around them.

Trash, Trailers, and Trace

Trailers are not cleaned at the meet site. Any trash generated at a hunt breakfast or tailgate is removed entirely, including ground litter that may have come loose. We aim to leave your country exactly as we found it, with no evidence the hunt was ever there but the hoofprints, which weather away.

Non-Hunting Days

Permission to hunt across your property is permission for the hunt — not for individual members to ride, hike, drive, or trespass on non-hunting days. This rule is taken absolutely. Members who require access for any reason between fixtures must obtain your permission directly, and we will reinforce this expectation publicly and privately, season after season.

Insurance and Liability

Holston Hounds carries general liability insurance covering hunt activities. A certificate of insurance naming you as additional insured is available at any time at no cost — simply ask the Honorary Secretary. Both Tenn. Code Ann. § 70-7-102 and Va. Code § 29.1-509 provide statutory protection to landowners hosting recreational use at no fee, as discussed in the FAQ.

WHAT WE ASK OF YOU

A short and grateful list

We try to ask very little, because so much has already been given. The items below are simply the things that allow us to plan a season responsibly and to honor the trust you have extended to us.

- ▶ **Notice and Permission.** Permission, in advance, to draw fixtures on your property during the hunting season, with as much notice as you require. Fixtures typically start getting scheduled in the late summer for the season ahead. Generally, a month in advance.
- ▶ **A Reliable Contact.** A current point of contact on your end — your name, phone, and email, plus a backup if appropriate — so the Masters can reach you quickly if conditions change, weather threatens, or a question arises during a hunt.
- ▶ **Honest Communication.** Word of any concerns, restrictions, or sensitivities regarding your property — a section of timber being thinned, a calving pasture, a section of fence under repair, a sick neighbor, anything at all. We would rather adjust the fixture than test the relationship.
- ▶ **Your Company, If You Wish It.** A standing invitation, on our part, for you to ride out with us at any meet you choose. Whether you join the field, ride along in a truck, or simply stand at the meet with a cup of coffee and watch the hounds cast — you are always welcome, and we will be honored to have you.

That is the entirety of the ask.

We ask nothing further, ever, of any landowner.



THE ANNUAL LANDOWNERS' PICNIC

A small thanks for a great gift

Every well-run hunt we admire holds an annual gathering for its landowners — and we plan to do the same. The founding-year picnic is in active planning for late summer 2026, before the cubbing season opens, and we hope you will save the date once it is announced.

We envision an afternoon at the kennels or at one of our host farms — long tables under the shade trees, food brought by the membership, hounds milling about for the people who would like to meet them, and the people who make this hunt possible all in one place at one time. No speeches longer than the time it takes a glass to reach the bottom. No formal program. Just the chance to put faces to names and to say thank you in person.

Landowners are also our guests of honor at the Annual Hunt Ball. You will be acknowledged in the printed program, and you will be recognized by the Masters from the podium. Your families are welcome, and there is dancing.

AN HONEST NOTE

This is the founding year of the Holston Hounds. The picnic is a tradition we are committed to building, but we will be candid: the first one will be a smaller, simpler affair than the ones we hope to host five and ten years from now. What it will not lack is sincere thanks. The date and details will be announced through the Honorary Secretary in advance — if you have not heard from us by July, please call.



WHY THIS MATTERS

The conservation case for keeping country open

It is a hard time to be a landowner in our part of the world. Development pressure is real, taxes climb, costs climb, and the pull to subdivide is constant. Foxhunts, in their quiet and unheralded way, have been one of the most consistent forces working in the opposite direction for the last three centuries — keeping country whole, making the case for open land, and gathering communities of people who are willing to invest in its long-term preservation.

The MFHA's audience research describes a community in which the average member household holds \$1.5 million in real estate, of which 78% is farmland. These are not statistics about disposable income; they are statistics about people who have voted, with their lives and their balance sheets, for the kind of country you have spent yours building. By hosting our fixtures, you are connecting your land to a national network of landowners and sportsmen who will defend its character with every tool they have.

The Equine Land Conservation Resource — a national nonprofit working to keep land open for equine use — has identified hunt-supported landowner relationships as one of the single most effective bulwarks against rural land loss. The reasoning is simple: hunts and the families that host them have aligned, multi-generational interests in keeping land in agricultural and recreational use rather than allowing it to be developed. Where hunts thrive, country tends to stay country.

Holston Hounds is committed to that work in our region. Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia hold some of the most beautiful and most threatened working country in Appalachia. We intend to do our small part — through hunting, through stewardship, through the relationships in this booklet — to keep it the way you remember it, and the way your children and grandchildren deserve to remember it.

That is the mission. You are at the center of it.



CONSERVATION PARTNERS

Two organizations every landowner in our country should know

If keeping your land in working agricultural and recreational use — protected from subdivision and development for generations to come — is something you have ever thought about, the two organizations below are exactly the right people to talk to. Both work directly with landowners on voluntary conservation easements: legal agreements that permanently limit how the land can be developed while keeping it in your family's hands, on your terms. Holston Hounds has no formal affiliation with either, and there is nothing in it for the hunt if you choose to engage with them. We mention them because they are the most credible, established options available to a landowner in our country, and because the work they do is exactly the work that keeps hunt country open for our grandchildren.

THE LAND TRUST FOR TENNESSEE

For Tennessee landowners

A statewide private nonprofit that has worked with more than 400 Tennessee landowners on voluntary conservation easements tailored to each property and family. Each easement is a personalized legal agreement that permanently limits subdivision and development while preserving the landowner's rights to continue living on the land, farming it, managing timber, hunting, fishing, recreating, and passing it to heirs.

Potential benefits of a conservation easement may include federal income tax deductions, reduced property taxes, and estate-planning advantages — the specifics depend on your circumstances and should be reviewed with your tax attorney and accountant. The Land Trust monitors each protected property annually to ensure the agreement holds, working as a long-term collaborator rather than an enforcer.

Get in touch: landtrusttn.org | (615) 244-5263



CONSERVATION PARTNERS

For Virginia landowners

VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

A body politic of the Commonwealth of Virginia

Founded in 1966, VOF has protected more than 934,000 acres of Virginia farmland and forestland through voluntary open-space easements — averaging two acres conserved every hour since its creation. VOF easements are tailored to the conservation values of each property, whether the priority is water quality, wildlife habitat, working farmland, scenic viewsheds, historic significance, or some combination of all of them. Landowners retain ownership and use of their land while permanently limiting future development.

VOF's work is particularly active in our country. In March 2026 the foundation announced \$2.2 million in Forest CORE Fund grants targeted specifically at protecting 878 acres of forestland and wildlife habitat in four Southwest Virginia counties. If you own land on the Virginia side of our hunt territory, you are in a region where VOF is actively investing in exactly the kind of conservation work you may be considering for your own property.

Get in touch: vof.org

If either of these organizations sounds like it might be worth a conversation, the Masters and Honorary Secretary are happy to make introductions. Several members and friends of the Holston Hounds have firsthand experience with conservation easements and are glad to share what they have learned with neighbors who are weighing the same decision.



OUR HONORED LANDOWNERS

With our deepest thanks for the country we ride

The families and farms who have welcomed our horses and hounds across their property — whether by hosting a fixture, opening a gate, or simply pointing us toward a covert — make this hunt possible. We honor them in the yearbook, on the website, and at the Hunt Ball each year, and we recognize them again here as a standing record of the partnership.

— and to every neighbor who has waved us through, opened a gate, or pointed us toward a covert —

THANK YOU.



STAYING IN TOUCH

Your direct line to the Masters

If you have a question, a concern, a request, a guest you would like to bring to a meet, or simply something you want us to know — call. Email. Text. Drop a note in the mail. There is no question too small and no concern too large to bring to the Masters of the hunt. We would rather hear from you twenty times in a season than miss the one call that mattered.

CONTACT

Russell Haynes, Honorary Huntsman

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Vicki Jonkers, Honorary Secretary

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Holston Hounds is a member-supported club operating in the tradition of American mounted foxhunting. Without our landowners, none of it exists.

This handbook is informational and does not constitute legal advice. Landowners with specific questions about liability, easements, or insurance are encouraged to consult their own attorney or insurance broker.

