PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDELINES

1999
PUBLIC RELATIONS
GUIDELINES

Organized and Written by
Lt. Col. Dennis J. Foster, Executive Director

For the
MASTERS OF FOXHOUNDS ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA

Edited by
J. W. Y. Martin, Jr., MFH, President
Mrs. C. Martin Wood, III, MFH, First Vice President
James L. Young, MFH, Publications Chairman
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mission</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Policy Considerations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Relations Rules and Guidelines</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Considerations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising &amp; Commercial Considerations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations Suggestions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the Differences Between Animal Rights and Animal Welfare</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Liaisons with Local, State and Federal Game Wardens and Officials</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know Your Adversaries and Those in Your Community Who Work Against You</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach Out to Other Sportsmen</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach Out to Other “Like” Organizations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite a Friend Hunting</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delineation of Responsibilities</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE MISSION

The general public seldom understands organized mounted foxhunting. Each Member Hunt should have its own public relations program based on MFHA recommendations. Public relations are not just about the media. An effective program includes a number of considerations that relate to each other but are not always apparent. It also requires a great deal of organization and planning. The MFHA established the Public Relations Committee in 1946. Its mission remains:

1. Through the various forms of media to promote and educate the public about mounted fox and coyote hunting in North America.
2. To overcome widespread misconceptions as to the nature of the sport of mounted foxhunting and the manner in which it is conducted by its members.
3. To maintain good rapport with the public, government and the media and with the help of the Association to answer public concerns promptly and accurately.

This policy suggests methods to deal with inquiries from newspapers, magazines, radio, television, motion pictures, advertising, the internet and the local community. The basic considerations are the same for most media. However, special considerations will be addressed when appropriate.
GENERAL POLICY
CONSIDERATIONS

I. Masters of Member Hunts should attempt to cooperate with media requests. Local Hunt reports, when carefully planned, are good for foxhunting. All requests that may involve major media exposure or deal with sensitive political issues must be referred to the MFHA Executive Director.

II. Member Hunts should require their members or subscribers to comply with Association rules concerning “the Hunt” and submit all public relations matters to the Masters for their supervision and approval before release. Masters must educate their members as to why this is necessary. Articles or comments concerning Hunt business or activities to any type of media given by well-intentioned, misinformed members can misrepresent the Hunt and foxhunting.

III. Hunts must understand the right of all individuals to freely express their opinions. There should be no attempt to disallow free speech. Discussing personal philosophies or views is everyone’s right. We are all accountable for what we say. It is only when individuals are speaking for the Hunt or about Hunt activities that they should consult with their Masters before going public.
IV. The Master of the Hunt shall be responsible for the supervision and release of all official public relations matters of the Hunt.

V. Purely local publicity may be handled by the Master solely on the basis of his/her own judgment as to suitability, correctness and compliance with Association rules. Coordination with the MFHA office and or the District Representative should be made when there are any questions regarding policy.

MEDIA RELATIONS RULES AND GUIDELINES

1. Masters should not feel pressured to answer any media inquiry immediately. If you are not sure, promise to get back to them or refer them to the MFHA office. When being interviewed make suggestions that will enhance the story line and portray hunting in its best light. Remember most reporters don’t know or understand mounted foxhunting.

2. Try never to debate or justify foxhunting. Refer to the bigger philosophical issues: the right to hunt, the fact that animal right’s bottom line goal is a “petless, meatless society”. Animal rights zealots are against all uses of animals by society. The issues are often the differences
between country and urban lifestyles. As urban populations increase and country populations decrease, country lifestyles deserve minority considerations to preserve their history, heritages, economic survival and daily life.

3. Avoid any situation showing foxes or coyotes in captivity or being used in any manner not natural to wildlife conditions or the environment. (Having foxes or coyote in captivity is illegal in most states and against Association rules.)

4. Avoid any appearance of inhumane situations whether with quarry, hounds or horses. Emphasize the chase and acknowledge (if asked) that hounds sometimes kill foxes. When it happens it is rare. It usually occurs with sick or lame quarry or in areas with very large predator populations. Hounds do occasionally and humanely cull the weak. This helps to maintain healthy predator populations.

5. Avoid making fun or placing any aspect of foxhunting in a derisive light.

6. Encourage the need for sound, scientific and realistic education for our children that does not humanize animals or depict fantasy-based (Disney) movies as factual.

7. Avoid over emphasis on accidents or falls, which occur infrequently. Emphasize the outdoor fun and recreation of our sport and our reverence for animals and nature.
8. Be sensitive to the media’s tendency to exploit situations or make controversy to improve ratings.

9. Avoid situations that may create an impression that foxhunters use alcoholic beverages in the hunting field. Be sensitive to pictures of people drinking from flasks or enjoying stirrup cups or tailgates. Point out that not all flasks contain alcohol.

10. Whenever possible balance media coverage by minimizing the social aspects and emphasizing the hunting. Discuss America’s history, heritage and traditions. Place emphasis on the hounds. Emphasize how gentle they are and how they work together doing what is natural to them, hunting. Discourage publication of pictures or films depicting riders falling off or horses refusing jumps. Try to balance the opportunity for pictures with both horses and hounds. Camera crews become fixated on filming the field jumping. Encourage them to get shots of the hounds, which are far more interesting and complimentary to hunting. Explain to the reporters what the hounds are doing when their sterns are feathering, they lose a line or open on a fox.

11. Do your homework and try to find something out about the reporter. Ask for past articles they may have written. Check to see if they have a reputation for accuracy and honesty. Call the MFHA office if you need help finding information on the reporter. Ask them what their motivation is for the story and what kind of a story they are looking to
write. Ask if you can see the end product to assist them in assuring their story is factually correct. You will be fortunate if you do get that opportunity.

12. Be sensitive to the language you use in discussing foxhunting. Don’t be critical of reporters that call hounds dogs or misuse any particular term. Gently point out the difference but don’t make an issue out of being correct.

13. Educate your membership before you invite any media to observe your Hunt. Let them know the kind of questions that may be asked. Give them alternative answers if they are unclear. Never attempt to put words in their mouths. Make them sensitive to media requests for pictures that could create the wrong impression. An example could be portraying too many pictures of people drinking out of flasks. Advise them to come properly turned out (horse and rider) and not to overdress. They should not wear top hats and bowlers if it isn’t their normal attire. Hard hats with chinstraps should be requested. Encourage them not to bring green horses out the day of the interview or film shooting. Make sure they come to the meet on time, correctly dressed and just be natural.

14. Well ahead of time, Masters should identify the best speakers or members that will best represent your Hunt. Introduce a broad cross section of your membership including young and old, housewife, blacksmith, teacher, executive or doctor. Hunting is for everyone. Encourage their cooperation and participation.
15. Caution your staff on the use of harsh tones of voice, whips and any other activity that might be misunderstood or create the wrong impression. Be sensitive to the fact of staff carrying pistols and the questions they might provoke.

16. Realize that any day you have the media present the emphasis must be on putting your best foot forward. Cooperate with the media for pictures and hunt the areas that make it easier for them to observe. Hopefully you can have a decent hunting day but on this particular day hunting is not the priority.

17. Assure that if you have a reporter or camera crew following your Hunt in a vehicle that they have a knowledgeable member of your Hunt to guide them. It should be not only someone who knows the territory but someone who is also sensitive to any political issues he might be asked as he drives them around. If possible provide them with a driver and a spokesman who stays with them to answer questions and respond to unforeseen happenings.

18. Emphasize this is a country sport that entire families enjoy. It is about people who love the outdoors, animals and open rural spaces.

It is important to understand that there is always a risk when dealing with the media. We must do a better job accepting that risk if mounted foxhunting is going to survive. Realize that once you commit to doing the interview or filming there are no guarantees that the final outcome will be factual or accurate.
Even when reporters are honest and forthright an editor can spin the story around and give it a completely different slant. By paying attention to these guides you can minimize the chances for poor coverage and unscrupulous reporting. Most of the time the media does a good job. Most bad stories result from the media’s lack of understanding or inaccurate information. The responsibility lies squarely on our shoulders to do our homework and provide the media with accurate information. Only then will mounted foxhunting dispel the myths and get the excellent coverage it deserves.

INTERNET CONSIDERATIONS

The Internet is another form of public media. The cyberspace has the possibility of going to millions of people. The guidelines are the same as for other forms of media. Members of Hunts have every right to express themselves in this forum. However any information they wish to discuss on the internet about their Hunt and its activities should be cleared with the Master of their Hunt. Individuals have every right to discuss their views or philosophies, however, information about the Hunt or its activities, should be cleared by the Master. Members are responsible and accountable to their Hunts and they must accept responsibility and accountability for their own comments or statements if they choose not to conform to Hunt policy.
ADVERTISING & COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Masters of Hounds may not participate in any form of commercial advertising which emanates in any way from their holding a Mastership or being invested with the office of a Master of Hounds: such action being against the spirit of the sport and the principles of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America and injurious to the prestige of organized hunting when thus brought to public notice.

2. The Hunt or the pack should not be used unless the Master can use his influence to present the subsequent material or pictures in a manner favorable to foxhunting or at least one not harmful to it.

3. The name of the Hunt, names of staff or members or the name of the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America may NOT be used in any way in subsequent commercial releases, except if approved by the President of the Association or the Executive Director, upon coordination with the Officers of the Association.

4. Hunts must avoid at all costs the appearance of a Hunt being used for business publicity.
5. All rules and guidelines within this pamphlet must also be followed carefully by the Master if he provides technical assistance to the making of any solicitations for assistance from public media or other public material.

6. Any questionable inquiries regarding articles, radio, pictures, video, internet or television filming which may seem to be of a non-commercial nature and beneficial to foxhunting should be directed to the Executive Director. He will coordinate with the Officers of the Association before permission is given to use the name of any Hunt or that of the Association.

7. Hunts and their membership and hounds should not contract for commercial media advertising resulting in monetary remuneration to the Hunt unless approved in advance by the Association.

8. Actions by Masters of Hounds or Member Hunts involving unapproved, inappropriate public media advertising for remuneration are subject to discipline by the Association, to include censure, fine, suspension or other actions deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors.

PUBLIC RELATIONS
SUGGESTIONS

1. The importance of public relations cannot be over-estimated. The relationship that your Hunt develops in its community with landowners, residents of Hunt countries, businessmen, media, schools, government officials, law enforcement and even passers-by are indicative of an effective Public Relations Program.

2. Begin with landowner relations. Good landowner relations are essential to the survival of a Hunt. Take the time to meet them and whenever possible, live in your Hunt country.

3. Participate and join in local and state events as an MFH. Encourage your Hunt members also to do so. Patronize or donate to local events sponsored by the police, post office, hospital, and community groups. Get involved with your local humane and conservation societies and serve on their boards if possible.

4. Be prepared to speak on fox hunting. Do your homework first and know your subject well. Use the MFHA guidelines. Keep a moderately low profile, but do not avoid the press.

5. Coordinate public relations efforts with someone who is PR savvy.

6. Make a special effort to contact and know local government
and police officials. Don’t wait for a crisis to occur before you make liaisons with these important agencies. Know which state and federal officials are sympathetic and support country and rural issues.

7. Know and work with your game warden, game commissioner, and area conservation department.

8. Hold events (parties, dinners) and invite landowners and local residents. Keep them informed about what you are doing to support the community.

9. Don’t neglect the residents in your country. Pay attention to the families that reside in your countryside that are not landowners. These people live in the houses you pass on the side of the road as you road hounds. Usually, they're friends of your landowners and if you offend them you lose valuable support. Some small token of your appreciation of their tolerance will go a long way. Remember they frequently tolerate your hounds, and often call you when a stray hound shows up at their door.

10. Encourage your members to do business with your landowners when possible. Each year provide a list of these people and the types of businesses they offer and give it to your members. Use local businesses when possible and let landowners know what you are doing for the local community. Buying hay, feeds, using local businesses and local restaurants encourages support.
11. Make an effort to know what the local schools teach about animals, wildlife and conservation. Don't be afraid to speak at a school or invite children to your kennel for a field trip. Encourage Pony Club hunts.

12. Speak to groups when asked to help educate them about mounted foxhunting and field sports in general, especially senior citizen groups, urban children summer camps, Pony Clubs and 4-H organizations. Use members who are good or gifted speakers. Make sure they know their subject well and have considered their audience. Bring puppies or hounds when you speak. Hounds receive wonderful responses and sometimes are more effective than anything you can say.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ANIMAL RIGHTS AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Point out that the basic problem is that animal rights activists endorse the concept that animals and humans are of equal importance. Explain the difference between animal rights and animal welfare.

ANIMAL RIGHTS:
These activists have a political philosophy that has little or nothing to do with humane organizations. They have no tolerance for other lifestyles. Their bottom line is a petless, meatless world.

**VS.**

**ANIMAL WELFARE:**

These are people who care about animals and want to do something to assure animals are not abused, misused, or needlessly suffer. They are people who love animals. They believe that our relationship with animals enrich our lives both physically and mentally. Local Humane Societies and animal shelters are examples of animal welfare groups.

a. Contrary to animal rights propaganda, hunters founded and built the conservation movement. Discover what organizations in your area have worked to protect wildlife and open space. Encourage your members to join them.

b. Animal rightists do not represent the views of non-hunting people. A recent Gallup poll showed only seven percent of the public agrees with animal rights objectives. Seventy-seven percent were opposed to anti-hunting efforts.
c. Point out that with an estimated annual budget of over $300,000,000 the animal rights groups have given no monies to purchase lands for wildlife, or funds necessary for wildlife research. Wildlife conservation is about fighting to maintain habitat - not about leaving a bowl of milk outside your door. Hunters were the first, and are the foremost, proponents of conservation.

MAKING LIAISONS WITH LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GAME WARDENS AND OFFICIALS

Your Hunt should have a thorough understanding of state game laws that affect hunting with hounds. It is important to stay in compliance with hunting regulations regarding prey, hunting licenses, and seasons. You should also be in compliance with laws that regulate dogs (kennel licenses, rabies vaccinations, preventative medicine), horses (Coggins tests, or other medical requirements), and firearms (such as permits to allow a whipper-in to carry a pistol).
KNOW YOUR ADVERSARIES
AND THOSE IN YOUR
COMMUNITY WHO WORK
AGAINST YOU

1. Keep abreast of anti-hunting activity. The defensive posture of most pro-hunting groups is no longer sufficient. All field sports must become more actively involved in the political process. Remember that almost 70 percent of all voters will support the status quo if given a reason for doing so. Counter protests, intelligently handled, can take the wind out of their sails. All sportsmen must rise from their bed of complacency.

2. Research the goals of these organizations and how they plan to proceed. Discover how they are financed; how much financial backing you are up against. Just because they do not agree does not mean they are fanatics or bad people.

3. Subscribe to local media publications especially if you live outside your hunt country. Know the issues your community is concerned about.
REACH OUT TO OTHER SPORTSMEN

Get acquainted with deer and turkey hunters, coon hunters, rabbit hunters, trappers, other foxhunters and fishermen. Let them know you want to cooperate and that your goals are similar. Be prepared to join your support with others, especially regarding legislation affecting country issues.

REACH OUT TO OTHER "LIKE" ORGANIZATIONS

Look for organizations that have similar values such as horse organizations that use public lands for trail riding and competition. These are organizations that use parks and government preserves, such as hiking groups and mountain bike groups. Try to understand their needs and your differences and how to work together. Educate them about our sport and determine how we can work together... COMMUNICATE!

INVITE A FRIEND HUNTING
Introduce as many people as possible to your point of view. Invite your friends and acquaintances to ride, car follow, visit the kennel or come to a Hunt function.

**DELINEATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The Master of each Member Hunt is responsible for proper conduct of Public Relations and Publicity in his/her Hunt.

2. Each Member Hunt’s Board of Directors, Officers, members or subscribers must understand clearly that Public Relations matters are the responsibility of the Masters and must be cleared through them.

3. District Representatives must be kept informed about local public relations issues by Masters in their districts. District Representatives are responsible for keeping the Masters of Hunts in their District informed on national issues that might affect their districts.

4. Information supplied herein by the Association lists principal objectives, rules and procedures. Most media requests are extremely time sensitive; therefore all requests must be referred immediately to the Executive Director. It is his responsibility to keep the Officers and Board of Directors informed on Public Relations issues.