

## Research by the Federation of Welsh Farmers' Packs supports changes to the Hunting Act

New hunting research\* carried out in Scotland for the Federation of Welsh Farmers' Packs (FWFP), shows clear need for change in the law on fox control with dogs. The research shows that the limit of two dogs to flush and shoot foxes makes the practice both ineffective and illogical as far fewer foxes are found and individual foxes are chased for a longer period before they can be shot.

Farmers in upland Wales have traditionally used packs of hounds to find and flush out foxes so they can be shot to control fox numbers and protect lambs and other livestock. Since the Hunting Act came into force in 2005 farmers in England and Wales (but not in Scotland) have been limited to using two dogs under strict conditions. As both pro and anti hunting organisations pointed out at the time two dogs are useless for this purpose in most areas and survey research\*\* suggests that lamb predation by foxes has increased since the law came into force.

The law in Scotland still allows an unlimited number of dogs to be used when shooting foxes so researchers were able to compare the use of two dogs to the use of a full pack. The research shows that more than twice as many foxes were found and flushed using a pack of hounds (0.89 fox/covert) than when using two (0.44 fox/covert). When a fox was found it took more than twice as long (21.4 mins) for two dogs to flush it out of cover than it did for a pack of dogs (9.7 mins). The research will be submitted for peer review.

Ken Jones, Chairman of the FWFP, said: "The law as it stands is a joke. Everyone knows that trying to find a fox in thousands of acres of forestry with two dogs is nigh on impossible and as the fox population grows our lamb losses rise. There was never any justification for the two dog limit and what this research shows is it is as bad for the fox as it is for the farmer.

"We are calling on the Government to address this issue and allow us to manage the fox population in the effective and humane manner we did before the Hunting Act. This is not about red coats and horses it is about the real impact on farmers and their livestock in some of the most marginal farming areas in Britain".

ENDS

Notes

\* 'A pack of dogs is more effective at flushing red foxes (*vulpes vulpes*) to guns than a pair' JRJ Naylor, JG Knott

\*\*A recent survey of Welsh farmers carried out by the FWFP has shown that:

- 76% of farmers asked have lost more lambs to foxes since 2005.
- 96% say that lamb predation by foxes has an impact on their farm income.
- 96% of farmers do not consider as effective the Hunting Act exemption allowing the use of two dogs to flush foxes to guns.

All research available in full on the Federation of Welsh Farmers' Packs website