

'Are they going to eat me alive?': trail runners become prey in newest form of hunting

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What traditional events or sports involving animals can you think of?
2. Do you think traditional events or sports involving animals should be preserved?
3. What do you think about hunting for sport?

2 Key words

a. Match the correct word or phrase to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

ban	convicts	hounds	gobbled up	wokery
clambering	exhilarating	baying	zealous	quarry
bogs	bombarded	hunker down	scrambling	scent
allayed	ghoulish	kennels	odour	unworkable

1. _____: ideas or actions linked to being socially progressive, often used critically
2. _____: areas with very wet, muddy ground
3. _____: ate or used something quickly and eagerly
4. _____: shelters or buildings for dogs
5. _____: making you feel excited and full of energy
6. _____: making a loud, long barking or howling sound (dogs)
7. _____: a smell, especially one that can be followed
8. _____: not practical or not able to succeed
9. _____: to stay in one place and prepare for difficulty
10. _____: the person or animal being hunted
11. _____: reduced or calmed fear or worry

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12. _____: climbing using hands and feet
13. _____: an official rule that stops something
14. _____: unpleasantly interested in death or suffering
15. _____: moving quickly and awkwardly, often climbing
16. _____: a smell
17. _____: showing extreme enthusiasm or commitment
18. _____: attacked or overwhelmed with many things at once
19. _____: people found guilty of crimes
20. _____: a type of hunting dogs

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. The dogs were led back to the _____ after the run ended.
2. The columnist dismissed the policy as another example of modern _____.
3. Protesters had to _____ up the steep hillside to keep up.
4. A single _____ broke away from the rest of the pack.
5. The announcement helped to _____ fears about the changes.
6. Riding the roller coaster was _____.
7. After days of rain, the field had turned into a thick _____.
8. He became so _____ about the cause that he refused to listen to criticism.
9. The dogs seemed to _____ their food within seconds.
10. A strong, unpleasant _____ came from the wet coats in the kennel.
11. The council voted to introduce a temporary _____ on the activity.

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12. In a chase, the person being hunted is the _____.
13. The group decided to _____ together and wait out the storm.
14. Journalists began to _____ the organisation with questions.
15. The hounds could still be heard _____ in the distance.
16. The hounds followed the _____ left on the ground by the runner.
17. She described the jokes as tasteless and slightly _____.
18. They had to _____ over rocks and fallen branches.
19. Officials admitted the proposal was _____ in its current form.
20. The escaped _____ was recaptured later that evening.

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Nervous reporter is chased across English countryside by baying bloodhounds, in what could soon be only legal way to hunt with dogs

Matthew Weaver and Christian Sinibaldi

15 November, 2025

- 1 Would you like to be chased by a pack of hounds? It's a question often put to highlight the cruelty of hunting, because the answer would seem to be no. Or so you would think.
- 2 Yet increasing numbers of people are volunteering to be chased across the countryside by baying bloodhounds in what could soon be the only legal way to hunt with dogs in England and Wales.
- 3 Under government plans to outlaw trail hunting, where dogs follow an animal-based scent, the planned tightening of the "unworkable" 2004 foxhunting ban has prompted growing interest in so-called clean-boot hunting. This country pursuit has the rare distinction of being backed by both the League Against Cruel Sports and some former fox hunters.
- 4 It involves bloodhounds and horse riders pursuing not foxes but cross-country runners. Today, one of those runners is your nervous Guardian reporter, as I join the human quarry of the New Forest Hounds (NFH).
- 5 It is not a blood sport, I have been assured. Despite their ghoulish name, bloodhounds, unlike foxhounds, do not tear their quarry to pieces. "They're very soft and friendly, you'll see," says Will Day, joint master of the hunt.
- 6 Day takes me to a Victorian kennels built for foxhounds and still topped with a weathervane in the shape of a fox. It is now home to 40 bloodhounds, noisily excited by the arrival of a lorry that signals they will soon be in pursuit.
- 7 It is also home to professional huntsman Danny Allen and his young family, one of NFH's three full-time employees. "This is the future of hunting," he says.
- 8 Later he will lead the hunt in a bright green jacket and call in the hounds with a horn. My nerves intensify when I'm asked to get inside the hunt lorry to allow the hounds to get a good whiff of my body odour. Before hunts runners are advised not to shower or use deodorant to ensure they are at their smelliest.
- 9 When the dogs' cages are opened they come bounding towards me in a whirl of black and tan fur, lolling tongues, and drooling jowls. They all jostle to put their huge paws on my shoulders to sniff up close and personal.
- 10 After the 2004 ban, NFH switched from foxhunting to trail hunting – a pursuit of animal scents, typically fox urine. In 2020 Forestry England suspended trail hunting on its land which includes the New Forest. This prompted NFH to switch again. It is now one of 22 clean-boot hunts across the UK.
- 11 A small minority of the hunt resigned in protest at this perceived wokery. Day would have preferred to carry on trail hunting, but now he is a zealous convert. He says: "Society moves on and you have to move with it. We were all very pleasantly surprised with how well it went and how fun it is."
- 12 NFH volunteers, who help with the logistical challenge of organising meets, include veterans of the Countryside Alliance march against the hunting ban in 2002, but also former hunt saboteurs fervently opposed to hunting any animals – except human volunteers.
- 13 Before the hunt sets off, volunteers are given a head start and begin running. To avoid confusing the hounds with other scents, Day takes us away from any paths. It means scrambling across thick bracken, heather and gorse.
- 14 Nervous glances behind show no sign of the chasing pack. But soon we can hear the ominous sound of deep barking getting closer. It makes the heart pump even faster. This is cross-country running with added peril.
- 15 Bloodhounds are used across the world for tracking missing people, suspected criminals and escaped convicts. On rough ground like this they can run three times as fast as a human and they don't give up.
- 16 We have no chance of escape. They are soon so close that to continue running would be futile. We hunker down in the heather so the hounds will have to find us only by smell and not sight. With unerring skill these stench-seeking missiles hit us in a flash.
- 17 Once again we are bombarded with wet snouts and slobbering jowls. Any irrational fears of being gobbled up are instantly allayed.

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- 18 As soon as they catch us the hounds quickly lose interest. They are already keen to start the next hunt. Once we have caught our breath and wiped ourselves down, we go again.
- 19 Over the course of the day we end up running more than eight miles in five separate hunts. Wherever we went – across bogs, wading through rivers and clambering through woods – the hounds always caught us. Their ability to follow their noses is uncanny and awesome to witness first-hand.
- 20 Being hunted by hounds is strangely exhilarating. It is certainly more exciting than a Parkrun.

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3 Comprehension check

a. Identify if the sentences are True or False using information from the article. Correct the false sentences.

1. Clean-boot hunting is an alternative to hunting animals and animal scents. _____
2. Clean-boot hunting involves hunting humans. _____
3. Clean-boot hunting is not supported by the League Against Cruel Sports. _____
4. The writer is hunting humans. _____
5. Foxhounds are more dangerous than bloodhounds. _____
6. Bloodhounds are used globally. _____
7. The hounds found their quarry easily. _____
8. The hounds were very friendly. _____
9. The hounds found their quarry by using their eyes. _____
10. The hounds always found their quarry. _____

4 Key language

a. Read the sentence below. Then answer the questions.

“Nervous glances behind show no sign of the chasing pack.”

1. What part of speech is *chasing* in this sentence?
2. What word is it modifying?
3. What are the different forms of *chase*?
4. If you rewrite the sentence so that *chasing* is a verb, do you need to use more words or fewer?

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b. Read the sentences below. Find sentences in the article with the same meaning.

1. Yet the number of people who are volunteering to be chased across the countryside by bloodhounds that are baying is rising, in what could soon be the only legal way to hunt with dogs in England and Wales.

2. Under government plans to outlaw trail hunting, where dogs follow an animal-based scent, the tightening of the “unworkable” 2004 foxhunting ban that has been planned has prompted interest that is growing in so-called clean-boot hunting.

3. It is now home to 40 bloodhounds, which become noisy and excited when a lorry arrives to signal that they will soon be in pursuit.

4. Bloodhounds are used across the world to track people who are missing, criminals who are suspected and convicts who have escaped.

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c. Look at the list of words below. Choose three and write your own sentences using them as adjectives.

broken
closed

damaged
growing

increasing
located

surrounding

Example: *The surrounding landscape was beautiful.*

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- It is always wrong to kill animals.
- Animals shouldn't be trained to hunt.
- If a tradition is old enough, we should always try to preserve it.
- Being hunted like the writer of the article sounds like fun.

6 In your own words

- a. In the article, one of the hunters, Will Day, says, “Society moves on and you have to move with it.” In groups, discuss how much you agree or disagree with the statement. Brainstorming examples that support the statement and examples that do not.
- b. When you have finished brainstorming, decide at random who will write half a page supporting the statement, and who will write half a page refuting the statement. Make sure you take advantage of the examples you thought of in your groups.
- c. Compare your ideas with a partner who took the opposite position.