

HUNTING WITH DOGS:

HUNTER RESPONSIBILITY & ETHICS



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
ncwildlife.org
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INTRODUCTION

For centuries, hunters have employed the use of dogs to find, trail, chase, point, and retrieve game. The bond between man and dog has grown and been strengthened in their role as hunting companions. This bond has led to the development of specific breeds of dogs bred to exhibit the skills and characteristics necessary to be used for different types of hunting.

Common categories of hunting dogs include:

- Pointers: Used primarily for hunting upland game birds.
- Retrievers: Used to retrieve waterfowl; they also can be trained to hunt other game birds.
- Spaniels: Used mainly as flushers for upland game birds.
- Hounds: Used for hunting both small and large game; primarily to find and trail game.

When hunting with the aid of dogs, hunters need to demonstrate responsibility and good ethics before, during and after the hunt. Caring for the well-being of the dogs, interaction with landowners and other hunters and complying with hunting laws are crucial for the continuation of hunting with dogs and preserving North Carolina's rich dog hunting heritage.

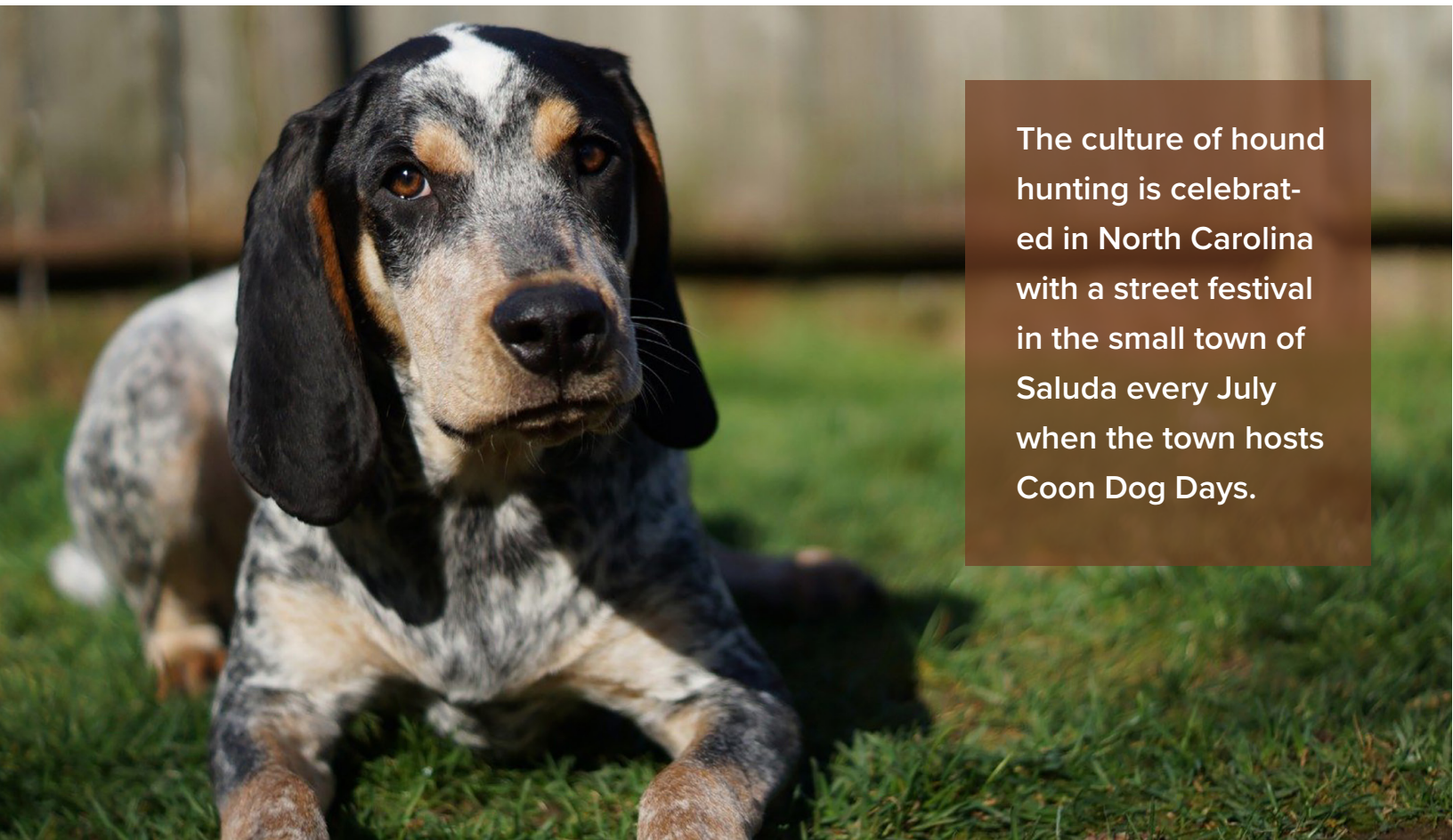
North Carolina History of Hunting with Hounds

Whether it is a deerhound running the swamps of eastern North Carolina, a foxhound at full cry in the Piedmont or a bear hound calling treed in the shadows of the mountain; the culture of dog hunting is intertwined with North Carolina's identity and history. Hunting with the assistance of dogs in this state dates to pre-history when Native Americans would use canines to assist with hunts. Hounds were later introduced by colonists and were used to pursue various animals. There is written record from period publications in the early 1800's that describe the use of hounds for the pursuit of fox and deer.

In 1989, the North Carolina General Assembly designated the Plott Hound as the official State Dog. Originally developed from boar hounds of Germany, the Plott Hound originated in the Balsam Mountain area of the state. The hound was used for protection and helped to round up free grazing livestock but, more importantly, was used to hunt bear. Bear hunting provided meat for the table and a source of grease for various uses to early settlers in the remote mountains where self-sufficiency was required.



The Plott Hound is the official State Dog, originating in the Balsam Mountain area of North Carolina.



The culture of hound hunting is celebrated in North Carolina with a street festival in the small town of Saluda every July when the town hosts Coon Dog Days.

Photo: Orchard Inn in Saluda

The culture of hound hunting is celebrated in North Carolina with a street festival in the small town of Saluda every July when the town hosts Coon Dog Days. This festival celebrates the loyal hounds, which are used for hunting and are known for their low baritone bark and an amazing sense of smell.

The real celebration of the hound is witnessed through the various hunts, field trials, hunting clubs and kennels across North Carolina that keep traditions of hound hunting alive. It is these clubs and individuals who keep the dogs in the woods achieving that for which they are bred. These hunters are entrusted with continuing the tradition and hold a responsibility for its continuation into the future. North Carolina's landscape has changed over the years. Fragmented land ownership and the state's population increase have created challenges for wildlife populations and hunting methods. To ensure the future of hunting, hunters must be ethical and responsible in all their actions.

The Dog's Well-Being

Hunters who employ hunting dogs have a responsibility to the dog and its health. All regulations regarding licensing, shots and identification should be followed. It is recommended all hunting dogs be vaccinated for rabies, distemper and worms.

Regular grooming, healthy diet, exercise and a clean-living space are essential to a hunting dog's well-being. Grooming aids a dog's health by removing dirt, burrs and parasites such as ticks, which can cause sores or lead to other health issues. Grooming also includes proper paw and pad care, ensuring that paws are not worn or cut, which can be painful and lead to infection. Maintaining a healthy diet, including plenty of clean, fresh water, is a necessity for the activity level of a hunting dog. Regular exercise and training will condition the dogs for endurance and stamina in the field. Providing a clean-living space will also ensure a healthy and happy dog, as well as reduced fungal and bacterial infections.

Hunters should remain in control of their dogs in the field for the safety of the dogs and others. Dogs that are pursuing wild animals could be injured if hunters cannot quickly reach them. When using dogs, it is recommended hunters use Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking or electronic collars to locate and maintain control of the dogs. Also, when in the field and considering shot placement, hunters should take care to avoid taking shots that could potentially hit or come close to a dog.

Interaction with Landowners and Other Hunters

While hunting with dogs can add enjoyment to the hunt, it is important for hunters to remember the impact hunting with dogs can have on landowners and other hunters.

When releasing dogs, hunters should never release or send dogs where hunting is not allowed, or where the hunter does not have permission to hunt. In fact, if a hunter enters private property without permission to hunt, release or catch hunting dogs and the property is posted in accordance with the [Landowner Protection Act NCGS 14-159.6](#), the hunter is in violation of the law. Additionally, hunters must be familiar with all local laws including those that govern entry into private property for the purpose of hunting, fishing or trapping.

The Landowner Protection Act NCGS 14-159.6 requires hunters to have written permission, dated within the past 12 months, signed by the landowner or lessee, to hunt, fish or trap on lands posted with signs no more than 200 yards apart close to and along the boundaries, including on each side of the property and at each corner if the corner can be established or purple paint 100 yards apart. Hunters must carry written permission on their person.



Photo: Thomas Harvey

Hunters should be proactive by communicating with landowners prior to the season starting in the areas they are planning to hunt. It is a good idea for hunters to contact landowners and meet with them to let them know they are using dogs and how they hunt. Responsible and ethical hunters using dogs should:

- Let landowners know when they are hunting with dogs; it is difficult to keep dogs on a specific block of property and dogs often stray on adjoining land. While hunters will try to control this, it does happen and they should assure landowners that they will quickly attempt to retrieve dogs from land they do not have permission to hunt.
- Explain the protocol used to retrieve dogs and/or and listen to the landowner's thoughts and suggestions, if dogs do stray on adjoining property where the hunters do not have permission to hunt.
- Respect a landowner's wishes, if the landowner is absolutely opposed to hunting with dogs on his/her property.
- Always leave the area they are hunting on better than when they found it, as they never know who may be watching and this could help build good will among the hunters and landowners.

Many landowners voice concerns that hunters are parked and hunting along the road next to their property. Some counties have laws that require written permission from the landowner or laws that make it illegal to hunt or discharge a firearm from the right-of-way. Hunters should know and follow local laws.

Hunters should always be aware of other hunters in the area, whether they are using dogs or not. Take time prior to hunting to review what seasons may overlap and prepare for possible interactions with other hunters using different methods. This information can be found in the annual [N.C. Inland Fishing, Hunting and Trapping Regulations Digest](#) and on ncwildlife.org.

Complying with Hunting Laws - Local and State

Hunting laws were passed to conserve and ensure that future generations can enjoy wildlife resources. Ignorance of hunting laws is not an excuse for violating them. It is the hunter's responsibility to know federal, state and local laws before hunting. It is strongly encouraged that members of the public and local landowners who interact with hunters also know the law and their rights.

Laws that apply to hunting with dogs are different depending on the geographic region of the state. Hunting with dogs is regulated by North Carolina General Statutes and the local laws of the individual counties. [Local laws](#) vary by county and can be found in the annual [N.C. Inland Fishing, Hunting and Trapping Regulations Digest](#) and on ncwildlife.org.

When hunters hunt with dogs, the most common issues they experience involve state and local hunting laws and regulations regarding trespass. Hunters are encouraged to review these laws prior to hunting.

If a hunter wants to retrieve game that has entered private property, or wants to retrieve their hunting dogs, landowners have the right to refuse access onto their property. North Carolina does not have a "right to retrieve" law. If the property is not posted, hunters are encouraged to contact the landowner to discuss entering the

private property to retrieve wildlife or hunting dogs. Hunters should review local laws that may require permission to enter upon the lands of another for the purpose of hunting even if the property is not posted.

The Wildlife Commission encourages hunters to build relationships with landowners prior to hunting season to aid in getting permission to retrieve wildlife or hunting dogs that may cross property lines.

In addition to laws that protect the landowner, there are also laws that protect the hunter and their dogs. Hunters use GPS collars to identify and track the dog's location. If the collar is removed, hunters have no way of locating and effectively retrieving their dogs. Removing an electronic collar from a hunting dog is illegal. [NCGS 14-401.17](#) states that is unlawful to intentionally remove or destroy an electronic collar or other electronic device placed on the dog by its owner to maintain control of the dog. Hunters should contact their [local wildlife law enforcement officer](#) if they suspect a collar has been removed.

In some cases, landowners have denied hunters entry to their property to retrieve dogs and refused to return the hunting dogs to their owner. To minimize conflict, it is advised that hunters contact local law enforcement before interacting with landowners.

In extreme cases, hunting dogs have been shot, poisoned or stolen. If this were to occur, contact local law enforcement first. The intentional killing of a domestic dog falls under local jurisdiction. If it is suspected it was a hunting incident, wildlife officers and local law enforcement will work closely together in the investigation.

Knowing and complying with hunting laws and regulations are essential for both hunters and landowners, and for the continuation of this hunting pastime and heritage.

Reference Materials

[Bear Hunting Magazine](#)

[Eastern Carolina Houndsmen Alliance](#)

[Utah Houndsmen Association](#)

[Virginia Bear Hunters Association](#)

[Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance](#)

FAQ for landowners and dog hunters by WRC Law Enforcement Division

North Carolina History of Hunting with Hounds

North Carolina Hunter Education Manual, Outdoor Empire; 2000©

North Carolina Hunter Education Manual, Outdoor Empire; 2002©

Today's Hunter, Kalkomey Enterprises, Inc.; 2016©



Hunters use GPS collars to identify and track their dogs' locations. (Photo: Jelena Safronova)