

Pennsylvania State Fox & Coyote Hunters inc.

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Fall Newsletter – October 2020



From the President's Pen...

While Covid – 19 precautions continue to impact our ability to hold most of our organization's activities, we continue to monitor the events and legislation which affect our sport. Listed below you will find our summary of these vital matters.

A Reminder about Overdue Memberships.

Recently we sent a final reminder to those members who have not paid their 2020 dues. We are requesting prompt payment so that we may continue to fund our various activities and maintain our advocacy of hound owners' rights with the various governing bodies which affect our sport. In the event that you may have misplaced your billing, you may remit your dues to Pat Carr, using the address which appears on the letterhead. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list, merely indicate so on the form provided.

Notes about the hound retrieval exemption: Game Commission receiving pushback!

As most members know, the recent Sunday Hunting Bill contains provisions which allow unarmed hunters to enter private property to retrieve their hounds without subjecting them to the enhanced trespass penalties. Pennsylvania is now one of a mere handful of states with a hound retrieval bill.

State Representative Mike Peifer, a member of the PA State Fox & Coyote Hunter's Assn., championed this provision on our behalf.

The Game Commission is now receiving considerable pushback regarding this feature. Some complaints concern hunters who may deliberately cast their hounds onto private land. Others complain that hunters may enter private properties to drive big game, under the pretense of looking for their hounds. Still others exercise poor judgement by flaunting the exemption with landowners who they have had an ongoing dispute.

Editor's note: We have a serious concern that such abuses may jeopardize the continuance of this exemption.

It will always be our recommendation that houndsmen make every attempt to secure permission to enter property for purposes of retrieving their dogs.

Although there is new language which allows doing so, if a landowner is surprised by your presence, it may only result in a confrontation. The exemption is new and untested. Any attempts to flaunt the language or abuse its provisions must be discouraged - if we wish to enjoy the privileges it provides.

Listed below are a few points clarified by the PA Game Commission, to the Beagler's John Gibble. John is an equal partner with us at the annual Sporting Dog Owner's Meeting and we thank him for taking the initiative on our behalf and sharing the information with us:

"1. I expect that if I'm found on posted property with a gun, and say I'm looking for my dog, the exemption would not apply. - Correct."

"2. If the property owner could demonstrate that I willfully released my hounds on his property, the exemption would not apply (e.g. phone video or trail camera).

Correct- the property owner would be able to prove the intent of the person releasing the dog.”

“3. Also thinking that this retrieval language only pertains to the trespassing while hunting statute, and does not extend to other trespass statutes. So if the police are involved, the dog owner could be cited under those other statutes enforced by local authorities. I know there was another bill passed with the same exemption language, but I'm a little fuzzy on what statutes it applied to. - Not true about the language only applying while hunting, Title 18 3503 (HB 1772) includes similar language to your question. This was the other bill that you said you were a little fuzzy on. This is found in the crimes code under defiant trespasser 3503 (c.1) Applicability- This section shall not apply to an unarmed person who enters onto posted property for the sole purpose of retrieving a hunting dog.”

“4. If while on private property my dogs cause damage, or if my entry into private property causes damage (e.g. I tear up a private road or run over a fence), I'm still civilly responsible for the damage- Correct. You can also be charged under the game code criminally too. Remember entry onto those properties is on foot.”

Welcome New Members!

Recruiting efforts for 2020 continues on a good trend... YTD, 27 hunters have joined the Association. Since our last newsletter, James Miller and Mason Lewis have come on board. Welcome hunters!

Legislative Monitoring – Pennsylvania HB 1747

Legislation to ensure the protection of Second Amendment Rights during declarations of emergency. (Such as Covid – 19).

Legislative Monitoring – Pennsylvania HB 2440

Providing for the designation of shooting ranges, sportsman’s clubs, hunting facilities and business relating to the sale and production of firearms and ammunition as life sustaining.

Editor’s note: The above bills are Covid - 19 related, designed to insure the continuance of outdoor activities and Second Amendment Rights during emergencies such as the pandemic. Both bills are under second consideration in the Senate and should be supported by the sporting community. Ask your Senator to support these bills!

Legislative Monitoring – Pennsylvania - Group Plans to Ban Coyote Tournaments in PA

In our last newsletter, we reported that the group “Project Coyote” along with two other PA based groups, has begun their campaign to ban all wildlife killing contests in our state. On September 21st, they announced that they have successfully achieved their goal in a seventh state, Washington, in this case.

The following announcement has appeared on their website. Needless to report, we will closely monitor this matter, in the event it is brought to the legislative level:

“Project Coyote and our coalition partners continue to make progress in our campaign to ban wildlife killing contests across the country. Just this year, Colorado and Washington joined Arizona, California, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Vermont in banning these cruel and inhumane contests. Efforts are currently underway in other states and at the federal level to end killing contests nationwide.”

PA State Fox & Coyote Hunter’s develop Bear Hound/Handler’s Registry for Game Commission

Since this Association has been called upon to provide bear hounds and handlers for four separate bear mauling incidents in past years, at our 2019 meeting we suggested, and the PGC has welcomed, the development of a "Bear Hound/Handlers" registry which would be provided to the Agency for emergency situations.

Since then, several members have stepped forward to volunteer their services. The initial listing was provided to the Game Commission in August 2019. Fortunately, we have not experienced any bear attacks since then, however we wish to keep the registry current.

We are requesting that any additional members, willing to be included, notify Dick Bednarczyk of their availability. Obviously you should have hounds which are capable of running and treeing bears.

In the event you have non-member contacts with capable hounds, we would welcome their inclusion.

In any case, please provide the contact information to me ASAP.

Remember To Support Our Sponsors

Johnson’s Telemetry, Prowler/Quick Track, Sportmix Dog Food, Thunder Valley Pet Pantry, Gundog Supply, PA Outdoor News, Double U Hunting Supply, Hunter’s Horn magazine and “Down Home Rice Pudding”. All companies listed provided gift certificates, subscriptions or merchandise for our various events.

Do We Have Your Current E-Mail Address?

With increasing frequency, the PA State Fox & Coyote Hunter’s Assn. uses e-mail for all Association business, as well as for response to individual queries from members. At present we maintain e-mail addresses for approximately 280 members. In the event that we may not have your address or that you have changed your internet provider, please provide your address to Dick Bednarczyk at dick.bednarczyk@gmail.com, assuming that you are willing to do so. Be assured that it is the policy of the Association to restrict this medium for official business, or to respond to requests from members. In the event that you do not have e-mail capability, please note that a letter supplements all e-mailed messages, when it is appropriate or necessary to do so.

Other Notes:

Be sure to thank a veteran on Veteran’s Day and remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

Be sure to exercise your voting privileges on the upcoming Election Day.