

Beagling is a sport of tradition, dating back to 400 B.C. in the days of Ancient Greece. In due time it spread through Europe, eventually crossing the Atlantic with the English. Today there are hundreds of private and club sponsored beagle packs throughout the United States.

Beagling is a sport of chase and rarely of capture, as the wily rabbit leads an eager pack of hounds on a whirlwind tour through the countryside. As the pace is not especially fast, onlookers (known as the Field) can follow along on foot, enjoying the beautiful countryside. Most newcomers are introduced to the sport during the formal hunting season, usually a Sunday afternoon meet. However the hounds are regularly exercised and hunted throughout the week and those interested in becoming more involved with hounds and hunting are always welcome.

The following is a brief introduction to the sport of beagling. It is meant to familiarize the newcomer with the structure and practices of the hunt and to offer general guidance for those following along.

Arriving at the meet:

The locations of formal Sunday hunts are listed on the seasonal fixture card sent to all members. Non-members can call the kennel or Master for the time and place. Most hunts meet at a local residence and begin at either 2:30 or 3:30 p.m. If participants are interested in attending informal hunts or morning 'walk-outs', they are encouraged to contact the huntsman for further information. Informal participation is always welcome and appreciated.

Please arrive promptly. Latecomers often have difficulty locating the Field once they have moved on. Attire may vary depending on the weather. Waterproof, ankle high footwear is recommended. Conditions can be a little tricky depending on the location, including muddy terrain, steep hillsides and uncooperative weather. Very young children or persons with physical limitations may find the outing too challenging. However, hunt followers may sometimes position themselves on a hillside or follow in a car.

The Field Master:

When arriving at the hunt, please introduce yourself to the Master and the Field Master. The Field Master is in charge of leading the eager beaglers through the

countryside. Please follow the Field Master at all times. He/she will lead you along the safest, wisest route, while ensuring the best possible view of the hunt. A scattered, disorganized field distracts the hounds and may interfere with the hunt.

The Capping Fee:

Members of the club are not required to pay a capping fee. However, it is customary, for guests (or their hosts) to pay a token sum. These fees should be paid directly to the Field Master at the start of the hunt.

Field Etiquette:

The primary responsibility of the field is to spend a lovely afternoon following and observing the hounds and hunt while enjoying the countryside. There are, however, a few points of hunting etiquette, which need to be observed.

Perhaps one of the most important is the field's interaction with the hounds. The beagles tend to be of a rather friendly and social nature and may come your way seeking attention. It is best to simply smile and ignore them. If Lucy the beagle insists on becoming your best friend or worse, seems to be heading in the wrong direction, please do one of the following: Look around for a whipper-in and ask them for help redirecting Lucy. If there are no staff members present, raise your arms outward and say 'pack in!' Do not chase the beagle, as they will probably run the wrong direction. When in doubt, tell the Field Master. If Lucy will not leave your side, it probably means she has no desire to become a hunting hound and would prefer to be your new housedog. We will provide the adoption papers.

As you follow along the hunt, please keep in mind that we are the guests of the landowner(s). If you open a gate to pass through, be sure to close it. If climbing over fences, remain close to a supporting post. Stay to the edge of planted fields and away from gardens. If any property is damaged, inform the Field Master immediately.

The Tea

During the formal season, hunts are followed by a Tea. The Tea usually takes place at a nearby residence and is graciously sponsored by various club members. A Tea can range anywhere from a light snack to a heavyweight meal. It is a general practice that the main meal does not begin until the arrival of the huntsman and staff.

Please wait to enter the home of the hosts until the hunt is officially complete. General etiquette dictates that the tea is for those who have followed along on the hunt that day. Unless you have received a special invitation by the Master or the hosts please do not attend the tea if you have not gone hunting. Please be considerate of the hosts' home. Park carefully and mindfully. Please remove muddy shoes and wet attire.

Members who regularly attend Sunday hunts are expected to assist in hosting a Tea every second to third season.

We are glad to have you along on the hunt and hope you will join us regularly.

Beagle speak

A few identifying beagle terms:

Huntsman/ Master: Person in charge of hunting the hounds. Carries a horn and is the primary director of the hunt.

Whipper-in: Staff member dressed in green hunt coat with gold trim and white pants. They are the eyes and ears for the huntsman, ensuring that the hounds follow along as directed.

Field Marshal: The person who leads the field over hill and dale following the hounds. Spectators should always follow and adhere to the guidelines set by the Field Marshal.

The Field: Those who come along to follow the hunt.

Colours: The recognition bestowed upon members of the hunt and field who have contributed over the years with their time and service. They also wear a green hunt coat with gold trim.

Tea: Light to heavy fare following the hunt. Usually held at a member's residence.

Tally-ho!: Phrase used when a rabbit is viewed.

Hold hard: Command given by huntsman, staff or Field Master when they wish the field or an individual to stop immediately.

Leave it: Command given when hounds are pursuing a quarry other than rabbit.

The Line: Path of the rabbit.

Honorary Secretary: An appointed position. This member(s) arranges the meets and teas for the hunt season and mail out the fixture card.

Fixture Card: The calendar of hunts and teas and their location for the season.