

## Political Hunting Timeline

### July 3 1998

Labour MP Michael Foster's wild mammals (hunting with dogs) bill blocked in parliament by opposition filibustering.

### July 8 1999

On BBC's Question Time, Tony Blair promises to ban hunting before the next election. This comment appears to catch ministers by surprise.

### September 27 1999

Tony Blair backs off his commitment on fox hunting, suggesting that the Queen's speech in the autumn would not mention the issue.

### September 28 1999

Pro-hunt protestors demonstrate outside the Labour party conference in Bournemouth.

### November 11 1999

Jack Straw asks Lord Burns, a former Treasury civil servant, to chair an inquiry into fox hunting.

### June 15 2000

The Burns report is released, concluding that fox hunting "seriously compromises the welfare of the fox".

### July 7 2000

Jack Straw, the home secretary, puts forward a bill with five alternatives. They are: a wide-ranging ban on fox hunting; the status quo; a more limited ban; creating a new licensing authority; or allowing local referendums on the issue.

### October 20 2000

The Countryside Alliance announces a pro-hunt demonstration for the following March and says it expects to attract up to 600,000 protesters.

### December 8 2000

Hunting bill comes before parliament.

### January 17 2001

MPs vote to back the ban (399 to 155) on fox hunting, while rejecting proposals for licensed hunting (382 to 182).

### February 22 2001

Foot and mouth forces a blanket ban on hunting

### February 26 2001

The Countryside Alliance call off their March demonstration after the outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

### March 11 2001

Two Labour MPs are found on 'hit list' of anti-hunt extremists a month after a suspicious fire broke out in pro-hunt MP Jeff Rooker's Commons office.

### March 27 2001

The House of Lords throws out Downing Street's favoured option of licensed hunting (202 to 122) and also a total ban (317 to 68), while voting to keep the status quo (249 to 108). The bill is lost as a result since the general election prevents further progress.

**May 16 2001**

Labour's election manifesto promises a free vote, saying parliament will be allowed to reach a conclusion on hunting in the next parliament.

**June 20 2001**

A commitment to introduce the bill is included in the Queen's speech.

**December 17 2001**

Hunting with hounds resumes after 10-month ban because of foot and mouth disease.

**January 30 2002**

Blair sidesteps the issue at prime minister's questions when asked to honour his election manifesto commitment and reintroduce the bill. In response, the anti-hunt lobby threaten to launch a campaign against the prime minister.

**February 13 2002**

The Scottish parliament votes to ban fox hunting but pro-hunt campaigners immediately threaten court action to overturn the new law.

**February 17 2002**

Margaret Beckett, the minister for rural affairs, repeats the government's promise to hold vote on hunting in the current parliament but does not say when it will take place.

**February 27 2002**

At prime minister's questions Tony Blair confirms that there will be a vote on hunting. The next day's papers set out the government's plans to hold a vote before the Easter recess. The move is seen as a reward to Labour MPs for their support for the transport minister, Stephen Byers.

**March 18 2002**

The government delays other legislation to make time for a Commons vote on a hunting bill. MPs once more choose between three options - a full ban, restrictions on hunting or no change. The government signals that it now backs the middle way and amid signs that ministers will attempt to persuade the House of Lords to back the legislation.

In the vote, MPs - including the prime minister, voting on the issue for the first time since the general election - back a full ban on hunting by 386 to 175 votes. Support for the middle way falls - and Mr Blair abstains - but the government makes it clear that this is now its favoured option.

**March 19 2002**

The debate moves to the House of Lords, where peers back the middle way option - continuing hunting under license - by 366 to 59 votes. This overturns the proposal's heavy defeat in 2001. The Lords again reject the move to ban hunting fully - this year by 331 to 74 votes.

Meanwhile senior backbencher Gerald Kaufman threatens to withdraw the Labour party whip if the will of the Commons is not upheld and a ban not introduced.

**March 21 2002**

Rural affairs minister Alan Michael announces the government is willing to use the Parliament Act to override opposition to a ban in the House of Lords. This placates Mr Kaufman but provokes fury among peers. Labour backbenchers and animal rights groups are also angered by government plans for a six-month consultation period aimed at reaching a compromise between both houses before a ban could be pushed through.

**March 30 2002**

Ministers are still working on a compromise over fox hunting despite the huge majority of MPs voting that it should be banned.

**July 31 2002**

Scottish pro-hunting campaigners lose their legal battle to block the ban on fox-hunting north of the border, but immediately vow to fight on 'in every court in the land'. The court of session ruling clears the way for the introduction of the Scottish ban on August 1.

**September 9 2002**

A three-day public consultation begins at Westminster, organised with the cooperation of pro- and anti-hunting pressure groups. The rural affairs minister, Alun Michael, dismisses fears that the government has already made up its mind to introduce a ban and says the hearing should provide a "rational approach" to future legislation.

**September 22 2002**

Four hundred thousand demonstrators march through central London to protest against a ban on fox hunting and to increase awareness of rural issues.

**October 3 2002**

The Labour party conference backs a call for the government to force through a ban on foxhunting even if the House of Lords rejects it.

**October 9 2002**

A Conservative government would give MPs a chance to reverse any ban on fox hunting, says Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith.

**November 13 2002**

The government paves the way for a fresh parliamentary clash over fox hunting with the promise of legislation, but no confirmation of a ban.

**November 14 2002**

More than 160 MPs sign a Commons motion backing an outright ban on fox hunting, amid growing confidence from campaigners that they will be able to get the measure on to the statute book by early 2004.

**December 3 2002**

The government tried to reconcile the highly polarised public debate over hunting with dogs, by offering MPs and Peers a compromise that recognises both cruelty to animals and the utility of life in the countryside.

**December 16 2002**

While police and pro-hunt protesters clashed outside Westminster, MPs inside voted 368 to 155 in favour of the "third way" - banning stag hunting and hare coursing, but allowing fox hunting in some areas.