

THE HUNTING FARMER

The chapter "The Hunting Farmer" from "How to Ride to Hounds" emphasizes the crucial role that hunting farmers play in the sustainability of hunting as a sport in England. The narrative appreciates these farmers for their contributions and contrasts their situation with those in other regions where private land rights prohibit similar hunting practices. It argues that without the cooperation and active participation of farmers, who often own or work the lands used for fox hunting, the sport would face significant obstacles. These include the possible extinction of foxes, impracticable fences, and ruinous damages resulting from hunting activities on farmlands.

The text also delves into the lifestyle and ethos of the hunting farmer, presenting him as the backbone of the hunting community. These farmers, it asserts, have a unique perspective on hunting, seeing it as part of their cultural heritage rather than merely a pastime. This perspective allows them to navigate the balance between their agricultural responsibilities and their enthusiasm for the hunt. The hunting practices and the reliance on the goodwill of farmers for access to their land is highlighted as a peculiarly English tradition, unlikely to be understood or accepted by farmers in other parts of the world.

The farmers' tacit contributions to the sport are portrayed as a blend of custodianship over the tradition and a pragmatic approach to the use of their land and resources. They are depicted as practical, modest, and knowledgeable individuals who understand the land and the behavior of foxes, making their participation essential for a successful hunt. The chapter reflects on the different attitudes among farmers, ranging from those who hunt with ambition to those who prefer a more laid-back approach, always prioritizing the welfare of their land and livestock over the frivolities of the sport.

Finally, the narrative underscores the admiration and respect that hunting enthusiasts should accord to these farmers, recognizing them as the unsung heroes of the hunting world. The subtle critique of urban ignorance towards the rural lifeways and the explicit valorization of the farming lifestyle serve to bridge the reader's understanding of hunting as not just a sport but a tradition deeply intertwined with rural community life and agricultural practices.