

## **Quick Facts on Hunting Hounds**

### **Hounds vs. Sporting Breeds and Beagles**

- Coonhounds and Foxhounds are not classified as *Sporting*, *Herd*ing, or *Working* dogs by the American Kennel Club. Hounds have their own category. Any reference to coyote, bobcat, fox, bear, or raccoon hounds being sporting dogs is inappropriately used.
- Sporting dogs, including all bird dogs, are spaniels, setters, retrievers, and pointers. They are used for hunting but not for chasing and attacking large game and furbearers or for animal fighting. Sporting dogs have a predatory drive, but are often bred and/or are trained to have “soft mouths” and are used to point, flush, or retrieve. They are generally kept within a relatively short range of the handler.
- Beagles are hounds, but are used to hunt “small game” animals such as rabbits. Rabbits typically run in a circle, so the dogs keep returning to the original chase point (9). Beagles are smaller than coon and fox hounds and hunt small, non-aggressive prey.
- Coonhounds (American English, Bluetick, Redbone, Treeing Walker, Plott) and Foxhounds (American and English) are powerful and large and have a very high prey drive since they are used for chasing and attacking large game (bears in Vermont) and furbearers (bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, and foxes) (9).
- Multiple dogs are used for hounding large game and furbearers since wild animals can cause serious injuries to hounds while trying to defend themselves and offspring. Hunting hounds work in packs (9).
- Any legislation that affects “hounds” would *not* impact bird dogs or sporting breeds.
- Banning hounding of furbearers and large game would *not* prohibit beagles from hunting rabbits or small game animals.
- Predatory or prey aggression is also referred to as “predatory attack” (1). During predatory attacks, coonhounds and foxhounds have unrestrained bite inhibition. This means that bites are severe and tear, rip, or puncture the victim.
- Due to the “hard bite” of hounds and the fact that they hunt in packs, injuries and attacks to the target and non-target victims are serious and can be fatal, since the victim is bitten and attacked by multiple dogs, at once, from all directions.

## Prey Drive and “Recall”

- Predatory aggression and prey drive are the hardest and most dangerous behaviors to control (1, 2, 3, 7).
- Hounds used for big game and furbearers are dangerous when in a pack and chasing a target because they are in an extreme state of arousal (2, 9). Pack mentality and predatory drive for dogs are far more powerful than, and supercede, any attention given to a handler (2, 3).
- The predatory sequence, also referred to as predatory behavior (PB), in dogs is generally accepted as some form of the following: orientation -> visual or auditory stimulation -> stalking/chasing -> bite/attack -> kill -> consume (1, 2, 3, 4, 8). Hunting dogs have been bred to have traits that modify or strengthen aspects of these behaviors.
- Predatory aggression includes grabbing or biting the jugular or abdomen of the victim and/or attacking the legs to hobble and disable the victim (3).
- A predatory attack is the “chase -> bite/attack and/or -> kill” sequence of predatory behavior (1, 4). Although hounds used for large game and furbearers may be scent-oriented, as are many dogs, predatory aggression is triggered by the sight or sound of prey (1, 2, 3, 4). Whether a hound is sight- or scent-oriented is unrelated to predatory aggression and/or a predatory attack.
- Dogs with high predatory aggression become more aggressive when in a pack (7). Allowing a dog to chase down animals strengthens the predatory drive (3, 7).
- Coon and foxhounds routinely chase deer and nontarget animals. The hounding lingo for non-target animals who are attacked and mauled by hounds is “trash” (5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17).
- Fines and training collars will neither prevent continued attacks, nor control these dogs.

## Hounds Cannot Differentiate Between Breeds

- Hounds, not the hounder, are the ones choosing the target. They cannot be expected to distinguish between coyotes and companion or working dogs. They should not be expected to distinguish between black dogs and bears. One quick google of “hounds attack dog, pet, hiker, or horse” will provide multiple examples of hunting hounds attacking people and companion, domestic, and non-target animals.
- Professionals who work with dogs can determine breed composition upon visual identification compared to DNA analysis with less than 50% accuracy (15). It should not be expected that hunting hounds can do better.
- There are over twenty AKC dog breeds that resemble bears and nineteen that resemble coyotes, *not* including German Shepherds, mixed breeds, or variations within breeds.

- A couple and their Portuguese Water Dog, Willow, were attacked by hounds in pursuit of black bear for 45 minutes in Ripton in 2019. Willow was seriously injured and there were multiple injuries to the owners. The hounds did not discriminate between Willow, a black dog, and a bear cub (10).
- In 2019 and 2021, packs of hounds ran onto the property of a Vermont farm animal sanctuary and chased and harassed resident animals.
- Spider, a Terverun Shepherd, was attacked and seriously injured by hounds pursuing coyotes while mountain biking with his owner in Fairlee in 2021. The owner and her dog were chased for over two miles (16). The hounds mistook Spider for a coyote.

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