

Riders Follow the Clues for this Mock Hunt

by Kimberly Wallace, Oats and Apples Pony Club, South Region

Our club held a mock hunt last year and it was a huge success. I am a member of the local hunt club and have been hunting for several years and have whipped in, with another club in the past. I had laid a "trail" earlier in the day and the landowner had bush-hogged a path in the tall grass earlier in the week. **This trail consisted of a paper plates with clues on it telling the hounds what to do next.**

I acted as the Master of the Hunt/Huntsman. Two of the more experienced riders (one who knew the property well) pretended to be hounds. For example, the first thing I did was "road" the hounds to an area that looked like good cover (where I had placed my first paper plate earlier that morning). The hounds had to search through the cover looking for the "scent" (paper plate). When they found it they read its clue telling them where to go next, and "gave voice" while cantering along a bush-hogged path in tall grass, looking for their next clue. The path crossed a couple shallow ditches, a tiny stream and there were all level of jumps along the way that the riders could jump or just go around. We tried to make some of the clues funny. One of the clues next to a jump said "Master fell off horse. Everyone wait three minutes while she remounts" or "fox backtracks own scent, everyone backtrack to creek until hounds pick up scent again" -- another hidden plate to search for. "Fox went under fence, follow fence line until you find gate. Last person be sure to close gate," "Hounds lost scent. Master "roads" hounds to next cover to try again." This was a good place to let anyone that was getting tired or hot go back to the trailers. The hounds were doing their best to sound realistic every time they "got on a line" which was hysterical! We followed the hunt with a hunt breakfast (brunch) and gave some awards (candy bar, hoof pick, etc.) for best turned out; best hunt horse (the horse I would want to ride if I had to trade), etc.

FYI: The local hunt had already volunteered to sponsor the Pony Club. This amounted to letting any qualified Pony Club member ride with an adult member of the hunt without paying a capping fee. They also let our club run the concession stand at the Hunter Pace and Hunter Trial and Sponsor a Junior Hunt in December. Many thanks to Shamrock Hounds for such a wonderful opportunity!