

Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance
P.O. Box 657
Powhatan, Virginia 23139

May 13, 2008

To Virginia Sportsmen:

The Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance (VHDA) has repeatedly asked officials of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) why they felt it necessary to “study” our tradition of hunting with hounds. The initial responses to this question were that they had been receiving an increased number of complaints concerning the use of hounds in Virginia. DGIF at one point stated on their web site that they had had 906 complaints, but were vague about whether it was during one year or one guns season or just how long. We now know that 500 of those complaints were “road hunting complaints, many were not from counties where deer or bear are hunted with hounds!

The attached data was obtained from DGIF by requesting in a Certified Letter under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act in December 2007, after repeated verbal requests for this information were not forthcoming. The Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance is releasing our preliminary analysis of this data at this time because members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) requested information from us due to the absence of substantive information on this subject from the study staff.

This information is provided as scanned from the original response to VHDA from DGIF. Two columns have been added to enable analysis. The column labeled DGIF is the number of “Dog type” violations DGIF counted; please notice the discrepancies between the Grand totals provided by DGIF and our totals. The column labeled “Dogs or VHDA” is the number of dog specific violations reported under the two codes for dog violations. There are totals for each column and page totals. A total recap of all complaints received by DGIF from September 5, 2005 through December 31, 2007 is found at the bottom of the last page. Please note that DGIF said their original complaint numbers were from September 5, 2005 through November 22, 2007. This makes direct comparison difficult and this chart is not intended as an exhaustive report.

It is clear that the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has inflated the dog complaint numbers by a factor of 10. Even these figures are inflated because they include information from urban localities that do not allow any hunting and many of which have no open land on which to hunt if it were allowed. Richmond City, Petersburg, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg figures are all included in DGIF’s data. No explanation has been given as to why some data elements are listed for towns and not included under a county or City.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries would not be releasing detailed figures if they had not been forced to do so by the Freedom of Information Act!

January 30, 2008

H. Kirby Burch
Vice Chairman, Governmental Relations
Virginia Hunting Dog Alliance
P.O. Box 657
Powhatan, Virginia 23139

Dear Mr. Burch:

This is in response to your three records requests made to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF). Much of the information you requested requires significant labor expense to be incurred on the part of DGIF to generate, and will require prepayment of costs. Please see the cost estimate at the end of this letter. For some other information or records, DGIF either waives any fees, or we have enclosed at a nominal cost. The various records or information you have requested are addressed individually below.

Request A. Complaints to DGIF of Hound-Related Trespassing or Hound Retrieval

A1. The methodology for determining the number of complaints concerning Hounds and trespassing/retrieving of dogs received during 2006 and 2007 as reported on the DGIF website, broken down by county by month and year.

DGIF response:

DGIF Law Enforcement Division's Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) System was initiated September 9, 2005. When complaint calls are received, they are assigned category codes. The category codes include those described below.

OMDOGS – dog trespass/retrieval complaint, in general

HVDOGS – dog trespass/retrieval complaint, hunting violation

A hand-count from a computer print-out of Computer Assisted Dispatch System calls of these two complaint categories from September 9, 2005 through approximately November 15, 2007 totaled 406 calls.

HVROAD – road hunting violation complaint

A hand-count from a computer print-out of Computer Assisted Dispatch System calls of this one complaint category from September 9, 2005 through approximately November 15, 2007 totaled 500 calls.

The document on which the count was made no longer exists, but, using records of a similar data print-out which do still exist for a slightly longer time periods (September 9, 2005 – December 30, 2007, instead of through approximately November 15, 2007), a similar count can be re-conducted. Those records are enclosed; DGIF waives any charge for them.

The enclosed data is not, however, tabulated by county, month, and year. Information technology staff believes it is possible to perform additional analyses and generate data at the level of detail requested, but it would require analytical labor by a DGIF information technology specialist. See the cost estimate section of this letter.

A2. Identify the number of unique (that is repeat by the same person) complaints by County by month and year.

DGIF response:

Pursuant to §2.2-3706 (F)(1) of the Code of Virginia, DGIF respectfully declines to provide Law Enforcement Division Computer Assisted Dispatch (CAD) System complaint records which identify or allow for identification of complainants or other individuals, or CAD records which may not identify individuals but which include certain other information applicable to criminal investigation case file or reports.

Records of aggregated and tabulated CAD data that exclude certain data fields and do not contain information applicable to criminal investigation case files or report can be queried and obtained from CAD System records. Analysis of such data to control for repeat complainants, if attempted, is likely to be only partially successful. In any event, such analysis would require analytical labor by a DGIF information technology specialist.

See the cost estimate section of this letter.

Request B. Trespassing Citation Issuance and Conviction Statistics

B1. The number of citations issued for trespassing violations during the calendar years 2005, 2006 and 2007.

DGIF response: