

The Hunting Dog Owner's Code of Ethics

- **I will** provide proper care for my dogs including food, water, medical care and shelter and will firmly insist other hunting dog owners do the same.
- **I will** provide proper identification and contact information on all of my dogs.
- **I will** diligently work to retrieve my dogs by the end of the hunt recognizing it is my moral and ethical responsibility to retrieve every dog as quickly as possible. If I cannot locate a dog by the end of the hunt, **I will** do my best to retrieve it as quickly thereafter as reasonably achievable.
- **I will** only release my dogs on property on which I have permission to hunt and will not tolerate others releasing dogs on property where they do not have permission to hunt.
- **I will** find a proper home or shelter for any dog that I determine I cannot or will not keep. **I will not** abandon any dog and will not tolerate any one who does.
- **I will** consider myself a guest of the landowner, whether private, state or federal, always seeking permission upfront, and will conduct myself so I will be welcome in the future.
- **I will** do my best to tread lightly while afield, to carefully use only established roads and trails, to leave any gates as I find them (open or closed), and foremost to leave no litter.
- **I will** promote fair chase of game animals and ethical treatment of hunting dogs.
- **I will** strictly follow the rules of safe gun handling, obey all game laws and regulations and will report those who violate game laws and regulations.
- **I will** actively encourage young and new hunters to participate in and enjoy the thrill and camaraderie of hunting with dogs.
- While Virginia's "Right to Retrieve" law gives me legal standing to retrieve my dogs from any property, **I will** practice the "Right of Respect" toward landowners with whom I come into contact and their property. **I will** admonish my fellow hunters to do the same.
- **I will** always be mindful that I am the public face of all dog hunters when afield or in the community. **I will** strive to hold myself and others to the highest standards of behavior when hunting with my dogs so we all reflect well on the ancient and honorable tradition of hunting with dogs

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Know the Law

It is a class one misdemeanor in Virginia to remove a tracking collar (§ 18.2-97.1). The penalty may be up to a \$2,500 fine and one year in prison. Obviously, there are other charges that may be filed related to the destruction or attempt to dispose of the collar.

The theft of the dog (§ 18.2-97) or killing a dog (§ 18.2-144) may both be class five felonies with prison time, fines and the loss of citizenship (loss of the right to keep and bear arms) as a consequence. Unauthorized use of animal... without intent to steal (§ 18.2-102) maybe a felony if value of dog \$1,000 or more. Owners, as defined in § 3.2-6500, may maintain any action for the killing of any such animals, or injury thereto, or unlawful detention or use thereof as in the case of other personal property. The owner of any dog that is injured or killed contrary to the provisions of this chapter by any person shall be entitled to recover the value thereof or the damage done thereto in an appropriate action at law from such person.

It is unlawful for any person to deliver or release any animal not owned by that person to a pound, animal shelter or humane society or to pretend to be the agent of the owner (§ 18.2-144.2).

Right to Retrieve § 18.2-136 Fox hunters and coon hunters, when the chase begins on other lands, may follow their dogs on prohibited lands, and hunters of all other game, when the chase begins on other lands, may go upon prohibited lands to retrieve their dogs... but may not carry firearms or bows and arrows on their persons or hunt any game while thereon. The use of vehicles to retrieve dogs... on prohibited lands shall be allowed only with the permission of the landowner or his agent. Any person who goes on prohibited lands to retrieve his dogs ... pursuant to this section and who willfully refuses to identify himself when requested by the landowner or his agent to do so is guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor.

Trespass by hunters using dogs; penalty (§ 18.2-132.1) Any person who intentionally releases hunting dogs on the lands of another which have been posted in accordance with the provisions of § 18.2-134.1 to hunt without the consent of the landowner or his agent is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor. A second or subsequent violation of this section within three years is a Class 1 misdemeanor and, upon conviction, the court shall revoke such person's hunting or trapping license for a period of one year. The fact that hunting dogs are present on the lands of another alone is not sufficient evidence to prove that the person acted intentionally.

Hunting dogs to wear tags. (§ 29.1-516.2) Any person engaged in lawful hunting with a dog shall ensure that the dog has a tag identifying the name of the owner or custodian and a current phone number. The tag shall be securely fastened to a substantial collar by the owner or custodian and worn by such dog.

Report Wildlife Violations: 1-800-237-5712

Find Missing Dogs: www.vahda.org/missing-dogs