

**Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Hunting with Dogs Ethics Module Talking Points**  
**Revised 1/5/2023**

1. Hunters will promote respectful pursuit of game animals and ethical treatment of hunting dogs.

**Additional talking points: Take only ethical shots at game animals. Clean kills should be a priority for every hunter. Hunters should devote sufficient time and effort to locate wounded game.**

2. Firearm safety practices must be strictly adhered to. Game laws and regulations must be followed. Those who violate game laws and regulations should be reported to law enforcement.

**Additional talking points: Adhering to common safety practices such as not traveling with loaded firearms or shooting from VDOT roads or right of ways is important. Deer and other animals should not be run out of season.**

3. It is a moral and ethical responsibility to retrieve every dog as quickly as possible at the end of the hunt, when a dog leaves the area where the hunter has permission to hunt, or when the dog engages in the pursuit of a non-target species. Hunters should work diligently to retrieve their dogs upon the conclusion of a hunt. If a dog is not located by the end of the hunt, retrieval should take place as quickly thereafter as reasonably achievable.

4. Releasing dogs on property where hunters do not have permission to hunt is illegal. Releasing dogs near property where hunters do not have permission to hunt is unethical. The high likelihood of dogs entering property where hunters have no permission to hunt increases the chances of conflict between hunters and landowners.

5. Proper identification and contact information, including name and current phone number, must be present on all dogs used for hunting.

6. Hunters are a guest of the landowner, whether private, state or federal. Seeking permission beforehand and behaving in a respectful manner ensures hunters will be welcome in the future and protects the reputation of all hunters.

7. Participants in a hunt should tread lightly while afield. Only established roads and trails should be used for travel, gates should be left as they were found (open or closed), and hunters must leave no litter.

8. Recruiting, retaining, and reactivating hunters ensures the future of the sport. Mentoring and supporting young and new hunters is an important component of introducing others to the hunting culture. Hunters should actively seek out opportunities to share the excitement and joy that time afield provides.

9. Hunters must be aware that they represent the entire hunting community when afield or in public. Maintaining high standards of behavior when interacting with others (hunters, non-hunters, property owners), caring for their dogs, and pursuing game protects and preserves hunting's traditions and reputation.

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10. Finding a proper home or shelter for any dog a hunter determines they cannot or will not keep is important. Abandoning any dog is unacceptable. Dog abandonment by hunters should not be condoned or accepted and is illegal.

11. Hunters should be respectful of all landowners. Attempting to contact property owners prior to accessing their property to retrieve hunting dogs, being respectful and considerate, minimizing the number of hunters involved in dog retrieval, and refraining from causing any damage to others' property protects the reputation of all hunters. Hunters should encourage their fellow hunters to do the same.

12. Proper care for dogs, including food, water, medical care, and shelter is a basic responsibility of dog ownership. Dogs should receive sufficient food to maintain appropriate physical condition. Committing to providing proper care and insisting other hunting dog owners do the same is expected of ethical hunters.

**Additional talking points: Standards of care and containment incorporate the definitions in § 32.6500 by reference.**