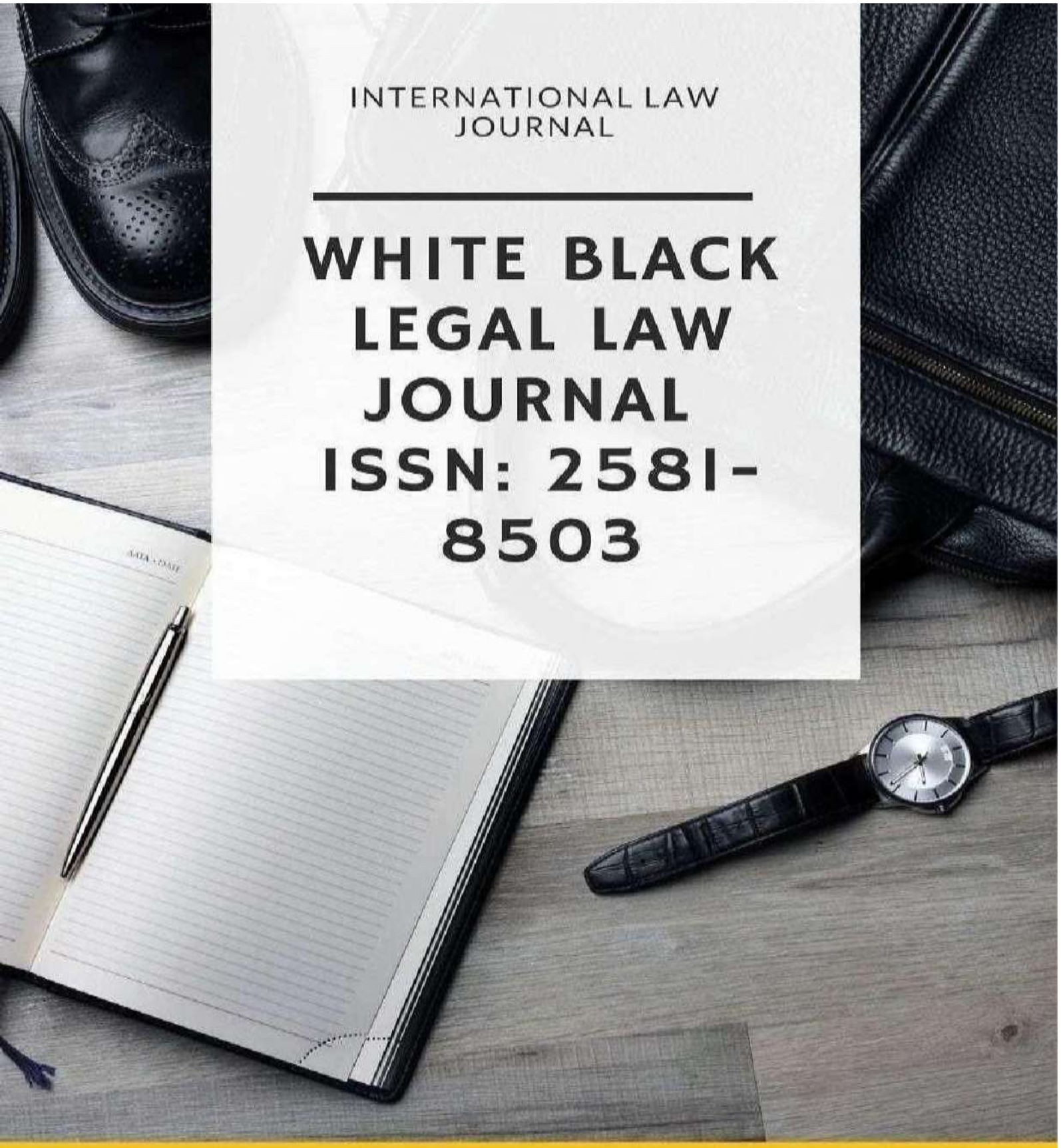

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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provide dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

FIELD SPORTS & THE ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE (BAN ON FOX HUNTING) BILL: A SOCIO-LEGAL ANALYSIS OF RURAL WORKING-CLASS CULTURE

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Keywords: Ireland, UK, Rural Life, Working-Class, Society

Abstract

This article examines the social and legal perceptions of field sports in Ireland, challenging the widespread notion that they are inherently elitist. It explores how urban professional classes, through the adoption of rural aesthetics and recreational forms, have reframed traditionally rural practices as markers of status, creating a persistent misconception about their social base. This article also argues that contemporary Irish legislative and media discourse mischaracterises hunting-related rural practices as elite imports, when historically and sociologically they were embedded in working rural life, small farming economies, and communal land-use practices. The 'elitism 'label reflects urban professional class norms, not historical reality, and risks reproducing a form of cultural exclusion under the guise of animal welfare. It also opines that practices become 'elite 'not because of who historically performed them, but because of who has the cultural authority to define their meaning now. The article further highlights the role of field sports in sustaining rural employment and the livelihoods of working farmers, contesting narratives that erase their historical and economic significance.

Introduction

Field sports, including hunting, shooting, and related rural practices, occupy a contested space within contemporary Irish social and legal discourse. Frequently depicted in media and legislative commentary as elitist pursuits, these activities are often framed as the preserve of urban professionals seeking a cultivated rural experience. Such representations, however, obscure a far more complex social history in which field sports were integral to working rural communities, small-scale farmers, and local economies. Far from being imported leisure

activities, hunting and other rural practices historically provided food, employment, and a framework for communal land management. They were deeply embedded in the rhythms of rural life, reflecting practical necessity as well as cultural tradition. This article argues that contemporary Irish legislative and media discourse mischaracterises hunting-related rural practices as elite imports, when historically and sociologically they were embedded in working rural life, small farming economies, and communal land-use practices. The "elitism" label reflects urban professional class norms, not historical reality, and risks reproducing a form of cultural exclusion under the guise of animal welfare. It also opines that practices become "elite" not because of who historically performed them, but because of who has the cultural authority to define their meaning now. By interrogating the assumptions underlying these narratives, this article seeks to uncover the ways in which rural working-class participation in field sports has been rendered invisible. It further considers the economic and social stakes of such mischaracterisation, including the role of these practices in sustaining local employment, reinforcing communal bonds, and shaping rural identity. In doing so, the article challenges dominant urban-centric frameworks and highlights the enduring significance of field sports as lived, working-class traditions, rather than markers of elite leisure.

It should be acknowledged that this commentary developed from an initial, provisional compilation of notes, extracts, and case summaries gathered at various points, some of which were anonymised, incomplete, or derived from ongoing litigation. These preliminary materials were later reviewed, supplemented with complete citations, and organised into a coherent analytical framework by their user (the author). Including this brief research trail in the introduction aims to convey both the work's developmental trajectory and the methodology underpinning the creation of this final text by a student.

Fox-Hunting and Contemporary Legislative Debate in Ireland

On 24 May 2025, 'Agriland' reported that People Before Profit–Solidarity TD Ruth Coppinger planned to introduce a bill to ban fox hunting in Ireland, alongside a protest outside the Dáil on 27 May 2025. Her proposed Animal Health and Welfare (Ban on Fox Hunting) Bill[1] would amend the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013[2] to explicitly outlaw fox hunting, trail hunting, and the snaring or trapping of foxes, including the use of dogs to chase, flush or kill foxes

[1] *Animal Health and Welfare (Ban on Fox Hunting) Bill 2025*
[2] *Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013. Irish Statute Book*

above or below ground. The bill argues that fox hunting is a cruel, elitist blood sport that causes unnecessary suffering, has no benefit for biodiversity or livestock protection, and is opposed by public opinion. It cites the UK bans introduced in Scotland, England and Wales, noting that loopholes such as trail hunting have allowed the practice to continue there. Coppinger has described fox hunting as outdated and unjustifiable, and her campaign follows her previous role in securing Ireland's ban on fur farming, as well as her support for banning greyhound racing and hare coursing.[3] Introducing the Bill in the Dáil, Coppinger remarked that, with fox hunting outlawed in Great Britain, Ireland has become an outlier. She asserted that it was ironic that the colonial powers that introduced fox hunting into Ireland had banned it - and yet it was still retained as "a relic."[4]

As outlined in a 2017 article by the 'Irish Independent,' controversial elements of fox hunting include the pursuit and killing of the fox, its strong associations with social class and tradition, and the fact that the animal is killed for sport rather than for food.[5] An 'Irish Examiner' commentary from November 2025 highlights the clash between urban and rural attitudes toward foxes in Ireland. City residents often feed foxes and see them almost as pets, while farmers view them as pests, particularly threatening lambs and poultry. The fox population, estimated at 150,000–200,000, has grown despite past campaigns to exterminate them. Foxes breed prolifically, with most living only 2–3 years due to hunting, disease, and road deaths. Farmers consider shooting the most effective population control. The piece concludes by commentating that, with natural predators, such as wolves, gone - and eagles too few to make a difference, debates over fox-hunting continue, with a ban likely in the future, probably accompanied by a compromise.[6]

[3] *Aisling O'Brien, 'TD to Introduce Bill Seeking to Ban Fox Hunting '(Agriland24 May 2025) <https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/td-to-introduce-bill-seeking-to-ban-fox-hunting/>.*

[4] *' Dáil Éireann Debate - Tuesday, 27 May 2025 '(Oireachtas.ie2025) <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2025-05-27/8/>.*

[5] *Pete Wedderburn, 'Is Fox Hunting a Tradition That Belongs in the Past? '(Irish Independent2017) <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/lifestyle/is-fox-hunting-a-tradition-that-belongs-in-the-past/>.*

[6] *Donal Hickey, 'Fox-Hunting — Conflicting Attitudes between Urban Dwellers and Farmers '(Irish Examiner27 November 2025) <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/outdoors/arid-41749371.html>.*

The Hunting Act 2004 and Contemporary Discourse in the United Kingdom

Fox hunting was outlawed in England and Wales after the Hunting Act 2004[7] was passed, taking effect the following year. Proposals to strengthen the Act in the early 2020s were met with a contentious reception.[8]

In a feature article for 'The Critic,' Richard Negus argues that the Hunting Act 2004 emerged less from clear evidence of animal welfare benefit than from political and moral motivations. He contends that the Act was rooted in the ambiguities of the 2000 Burns Inquiry, which concluded that fox hunting compromised fox welfare but stopped short of describing it as cruel. Despite this qualified assessment, the Blair government pressed ahead with legislation, overriding the House of Lords and framing the ban as a moral victory rather than a policy grounded in demonstrable welfare gains. Negus maintains that, nearly two decades on, there is no credible evidence that the Act improved fox welfare. Citing views from former animal welfare campaigner Jim Barrington and population data from organisations such as the British Trust for Ornithology and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, he suggests that fox numbers declined significantly after the ban, alongside an increase in shooting. He argues that hunting with hounds previously imposed informal restraints on lethal control, whereas the ban led to more systematic and technologically advanced methods of killing foxes, primarily through shooting. According to Negus, foxes remain subject to widespread lethal control by shooting, trapping, and snaring, calling into question claims that the Act offers meaningful protection. He further supports his argument by referencing Daniel Greenberg CB, the barrister involved in drafting the legislation, who characterised the Act as an imposition of moral judgement rather than a measure designed to advance public policy objectives in animal welfare. Negus concludes that the Hunting Act was ultimately driven by moral symbolism and class antagonism by the "new elite," rather than by evidence-based concern for animal welfare, and that its stated aims have not been borne out in practice.[9]

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[7] *Hunting Act 2004 (United Kingdom)*

[8] *Dominic McGrath, 'Labour Warned against Strengthening Hunt Laws amid Boxing Day Parades '(The Independent26 December 2023) <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/labour-countryside-alliance-steve-reed-government-worcestershire-b2469412.html> accessed 14 December 2025.*

[9] *Richard Negus, 'The Forgotten Mr Fox '(The Critic Magazine3 August 2021) <https://thecritic.co.uk/issues/august-september-2021/the-forgotten-mr-fox/> accessed 14 December 2025.*

Writing in 2023, William Moore opined that, almost twenty years after the Hunting Act had been passed in the UK, there was a genuine risk that field sports could be eliminated altogether. At the time, the government's attack on hunting had been a prolonged, overt, and bruising battle. Later, opposition to countryside activities became far less visible, taking the form of a slow, calculated use of legal and regulatory pressure. Over those 20 years, layers of regulation steadily accumulated. As a result, field sports and the rural economy that depended on them had suffered. Organisations originally established to defend rural England frequently allegedly acted against the interests of gamekeepers and farmers, leading to a countryside increasingly emptied of those with the knowledge and skills to manage and preserve it most effectively.[10]

In January 2024, 'Horse & Hound' magazine reported that large crowds gathered over the festive period in the UK to show support for hunting, while many others supported a newly launched campaign opposing tighter rules on trail hunting. These events took place as Sir Keir Starmer had pledged to strengthen the Hunting Act if he were to come into power. The Countryside Alliance cautioned against pursuing what it described as a "toxic culture war" by reintroducing a ban on hunting. It called on Sir Keir Starmer to address what it viewed as past mistakes and to stop what it characterised as continued attacks on rural communities. The Alliance used festive hunts to formally launch its Action for Hunting campaign, recruiting supporters prepared to take action against any further restrictions. The Alliance's director of hunting, Polly Portwin, said that hunts had once again been met with strong public support, with people turning out in all conditions across high streets, town centres, pub exteriors and open countryside. She said it was deeply troubling that politicians or activists could witness these scenes and still wish to legislate against what she described as a traditional way of life for political reasons. She added that any new legislation would have been unnecessary, would have wasted time, and would have caused deep divisions in rural areas, similar to those seen after the Hunting Act was passed in 2004. She concluded that while people in the countryside did not want another conflict over hunting, they would not have stood by or allowed themselves to be pressured or drawn into what she described as a toxic culture war.[11]

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[10] *William Moore, 'The Covert Campaign against Field Sports '(The Spectator9 August 2023) <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-covert-campaign-against-field-sports/> accessed 14 December 2025.*

[11] *Eleanor Jones, 'Tens of Thousands Turn out to Support Trail-Hunting at Festive Meets '(Horse & Hound3 January 2024) <https://www.horseandhound.co.uk/news/thousands-support-trail-hunting-festive-meets-847032> accessed 14 December 2025.*

Senior UK Labour figures joined a backlash against Sir Keir Starmer's plans to eliminate fox hunting, warning that the proposed crackdown was "misguided" and could cost him support in rural areas.[12]

In a 2025 'Telegraph' interview with Richard Thompson, joint-master of the Badsworth, Bramham and York South Hunt (BBYS) said that a further ban on trail hunting in addition to fox hunting would be profoundly regrettable and, in his view, unnecessary, arguing that the current trail-hunting framework was functioning as intended. He maintained that hunts were complying with the law and that considerable effort had gone into retraining hounds to follow artificial trails rather than foxes. He warned that introducing new legislation risked reopening one of Britain's most enduring and acrimonious controversies, rooted in long-standing divisions over class, animal rights, and the urban–rural divide. Such a move, he suggested, would also reinforce the sense that UK Labour policies were falling disproportionately on rural communities, alongside proposals affecting farm inheritance tax and winter fuel payments. Although reluctant to politicise the issue, Thompson described hunting as a lawful sport and expressed the feeling that further restrictions would represent another blow to countryside life. He also challenged what he saw as persistent misconceptions, rejecting claims that hunting still involved killing foxes or that it was an exclusively upper-class pursuit, and emphasised his own working-class background and lifelong involvement in the sport.[13]

Trail hunting was introduced after traditional fox hunting was banned in 2004 and involves hounds following a pre-laid scent instead of pursuing a live animal. The British Hound Sports Association (BHSA) has argued that trail hunting is "vital" to rural communities, citing its contribution to the rural economy as well as its benefits for participants 'mental and physical wellbeing. Olly Hughes, managing director of the BHSA, stated that trail hunting is intentionally created to highlight the abilities of hounds without affecting wildlife. He added

[12] *Amy Gibbons, 'Starmer Warned by Senior Party Figures That Hunting Ban Would Hit Rural Vote '(The Telegraph20 February 2024) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/02/20/starmer-fox-hunting-labour-countryside/> accessed 14 December 2025.*
[13] *Ed Cumming, 'Trail Hunting Ban Would Be a Nail in the Coffin of the Countryside '(The Telegraph19 February 2025) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/02/19/trail-hunting-ban-countryside-coffin/> accessed 14 December 2025.*

that it is a legal, ethical, sustainable, and carefully regulated activity, and continues to play a central role in rural communities throughout England and Wales.[14]

Socio-Economic Composition of Rural Field Sports

To understand the fabric of rural communities, it is essential to consider who belongs to the 'rural working-class. 'This group is often defined not only by occupation and economic status but also by social and cultural ties to the countryside. Clarifying this definition provides a foundation for examining the activities, values, and challenges that shape rural life.

Discussing Irish society in 1970, Ayearst noted that the rural working-class in Ireland consisted mainly of small farmers and farm labourers. Most farms were run by the farmer and their immediate family, and while some farmers also worked elsewhere for wages, the number of people permanently employed as wage labourers was relatively small. Landless farm workers occupied the lowest economic and social position. Rural Ireland had a surplus of farm labour, and only the continual emigration of farmers 'sons and daughters prevented widespread unemployment.[15]

A 'New York Times' commentary in 1997 highlighted the apparent irony that a party in the UK called Labour, traditionally associated with defending working-class interests, was proposing to curtail a countryside pastime that sustained and involved large numbers of working-class people. In response to the anticipated ban on hunting with hounds, supporters of fox hunting formed an organisation to underline that country sports employed tens of thousands of rural workers in Britain, from gamekeepers and grooms to blacksmiths and feed merchants, many of whom had historically looked to UK Labour for political representation. The article contrasted this rural, working-class perspective with the stance of UK Labour's largely urban and cosmopolitan leadership, who portrayed fox hunting as an elitist and cruel pursuit. Hunting advocates argued that participation in hunts was a common and accessible form of recreation in rural communities, not a preserve of the aristocracy, and warned that targeting hunting could signal a broader cultural and political assault on rural life. According to the commentary, the backlash exposed a tension within UK Labour between its traditional base and its modern,

[14] *James Diamond, 'West of England Trail Hunters Call Sport "Vital" amid Ban Threat 'BBC News (10 October 2025) <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy7pr2yvzvyo> accessed 14 December 2025.*
[15] *Morley Ayearst, The Republic of Ireland; Its Government and Politics (New York University Press 1970).*

cosmopolitan-focused leadership. Concerned about the political consequences of this perceived contradiction, party leaders subsequently sought to downplay the priority of the proposed ban in order to avoid alienating rural working-class voters ahead of the election.[16]

A 2011 feature in the 'Guardian' outlines how perception and actuality regarding rural society doesn't always align. Referring to a hunt in England, it is remarked that "despite the money on display here, there's not much to spare. The rural working-class has grown accustomed to living on a shoestring."[17] Discussing hunt meets over the Christmas period in 2024, the 'Times' highlighted that "a great many hunt followers are vets and builders, many of them are part of the rural working-class."[18] Articulating rural attitudes of Great Britain in 2025, the 'Telegraph' also asserted that "twenty years on, the Hunting Act remains an attack on the rural working-class." The author, Patrick Galbraith, outlined that "when a hunt packs up, wealthy followers can do any number of other things, but for the rural working-class - a hole is left. They aren't going to shoot pheasants or go on skiing holidays."[19]

Horse racing was firmly established in Great Britain and Ireland by the mid-18th century, marked by the founding of the Jockey Club in 1750, which formalised rules at Newmarket Racecourse and later influenced the creation of the Epsom Derby in Surrey in 1780. During the 19th century, thoroughbred racing - often called the "Sport of Kings" - grew especially popular among the aristocracy and royal family. However, its expansion depended on all social classes, through both betting and employment. As a prestigious and highly organised sport, horse racing relied on skilled jockeys, trainers, grooms, and breeders, offering rural working-class and impoverished people opportunities for social and economic advancement.[20]

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[16] *Warren Hoge, 'The Fox Hunt Is Hounded, but Won't Turn Tail' The New York Times (10 April 1997) <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/04/10/world/the-fox-hunt-is-hounded-but-won-t-turn-tail.html> accessed 14 December 2025.*

[17] *Robert McCrum, 'Hunting: Who Let the Dogs Out?' (the Guardian15 October 2011) <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/oct/16/foxhunting-countryside-ban-dogs-hunting> accessed 14 December 2025.*

[18] *Patrick Galbraith, 'Will This Year's Boxing Day Meets Be the Last?' (The Telegraph26 December 2024) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/12/26/will-this-years-boxing-day-meets-be-the-last/> accessed 14 December 2025.*

[19] *Patrick Galbraith, 'The Hunting Ban Came in 20 Years Ago – It Remains an Attack on the Rural Working-class' (The Telegraph22 February 2025) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/02/22/hunting-ban-came-in-20-years-ago-our-culture-poorer-for-it/> accessed 14 December 2025.*

[20] *' Horse Racing - Social Studies' (iMinds Canada 2019) <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/iminds/gam-horse-racing.pdf> University of Victoria. accessed 14 December 2025.*

The growing focus on education and its link to class signalled a shift in British horsemanship. Historically, expertise in handling and training horses was firmly rooted in the rural working-class, with skilled horsemen employed by landowners and tenant farmers. By the eighteenth century, however, attitudes towards the relationship between humans and animals began to change, and concern for horse welfare spread to new social groups. Paradoxically, this occurred at the same time as large numbers of people moved from the countryside to towns and cities, becoming increasingly removed from the everyday realities of animal care. This transition coincided with the rise of a wealthier, educated middle-class. As historian Roy Porter noted in his study of the British Enlightenment, educated people began to engage with animals emotionally and intellectually, rather than through physical labour. A heightened sensitivity towards animal suffering developed among the country gentry and urban elites, who viewed animal welfare as a moral cause. In cities, the mistreatment of overworked horses was highly visible and helped prompt the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in London in 1824. The organisation gained popularity and influence after receiving the patronage of Princess Victoria in 1835, and later royal status upon her accession. In Victorian society, where class distinctions were pronounced, royal approval ensured strong support from both the upper classes and the aspirational middle-class.[21]

Discussing hare-coursing in 1972, the 'Economist' magazine noted that, somewhat paradoxically, the abolitionist movement in Great Britain appeared to have lost momentum by this point. The Scott Henderson inquiry into animal cruelty, published in 1951, took an equivocal stance on hare coursing: it neither endorsed the practice nor explicitly condemned it. The report noted that other, less appealing pests were subjected to far harsher treatment, such as poisoning rats, and argued that private coursing was effectively impossible to regulate - raising the question of why it should be, when activities like cats hunting mice went unchallenged. Moreover, because hare coursing enjoyed strong support among the rural working-class, including miners for whom it was traditionally associated, it was not a cause that either of the man political parties pursued with much enthusiasm.[22]

[21] *Carolyn Jean Mincham, 'A Social and Cultural History of the New Zealand Horse' (Massey University2008) <https://mro.massey.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/248799ec-8158-4181-80b5-b11dbb398f45/content> accessed 14 December 2025.*
[22] *'Hunted Hares' (1972) 243 The Economist.*

Furthermore, an analysis by Mike Huggins of the University of Cumbria notes how Greyhound racing with a mechanical hare was introduced to Britain from the United States in 1926. Its first commercial venue was the Belle Vue Stadium in Manchester, after which it expanded to Liverpool and London. By the mid-1930s, it had grown into Britain's third largest commercial leisure pursuit, surpassed only by cinema-going and association football. The majority of attendees were drawn from the working-classes, including both men and women. Huggins points out how historians such as Ross McKibbin have characterised the sport as "genuinely proletarian" rather than socially inclusive, arguing that the small number of upper-class spectators were merely indulging in a form of sporting bohemianism. Similarly, Jeff Hill has described greyhound racing as being almost entirely working-class in nature. Overall, the sport enjoyed considerable popularity among certain segments of the working-class in large numbers.[23]

Rural Social Class and Urban Perceptions

The perception of the rural working-class has arguably been complicated by the adoption of their traditional aesthetics by urban elites. Styles once associated with working farmers and rural labourers - practical, rugged, and rooted in everyday work - have been co-opted by celebrities and fashion trends, sometimes transforming markers of labour into symbols of social prestige.

A commentary by 'Elle' in 2024 explains the rise of barn jackets and traditional workwear as a major fashion trend, driven by runway influence, street style, and high-profile collaborations between fashion labels and heritage brands. Once practical garments for labourers, items like barn coats and duck boots have been reinterpreted by luxury designers and embraced by urban wearers seeking comfort, nostalgia, and a sense of authenticity during uncertain times. The piece traces the barn jacket's shift from working-class necessity to a symbol of leisure and status, popularised by figures such as Princess Diana and Queen Elizabeth II, and now linked to aesthetics like "old money," "clean girl," and "gorpcore." Designers and industry figures note that wearing workwear in fashion is about creating a persona rather than function, blending

[23] *Mike Huggins, "'Everybody's Going to the Dogs'? The Middle-classes and Greyhound Racing in Britain between the Wars '(University of Cumbria 2007) <https://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/2781/1/Huggins_EverybodysGoingToTheDogs.pdf> accessed 14 December 2025.*

practicality with identity, heritage, and nostalgia, while also highlighting tensions between authentic use and fashionable appropriation.[24]

The Barbour wax jacket, originally intended as practical country-wear, is now culturally worn by powerful politicians, royalty, 'media influencers,' and urban subcultures, carrying multiple conflicting meanings across classes and cultures.[25] [26] For example, football legend and fashion icon, David Beckham, has frequently been seen sporting wax Barbour jackets. He is especially known for wearing the classic Barbour waxed jacket, usually styled with jeans and boots for a relaxed, countryside-inspired outfit. Beckham's consistent choice of the brand has reinforced Barbour's reputation as a core element of British country-casual fashion.[27]

Additionally, although the Land Rover Defender was originally conceived as a practical utility 4×4 for agricultural and military use, its cultural meaning has transformed significantly over time. Contemporary media and brand narratives emphasise its adventure, heritage, and aspirational appeal, turning it into a status symbol prized by celebrities and lifestyle cultures. Lifestyle publications such as 'Hypebeast' note that the Defender's presence alongside luxury fashion brands and celebrity owners has solidified its role as an aspirational cultural icon that is distinct from its utilitarian roots. Similarly, heritage and automotive commentators describe how its rugged image now carries symbolic weight in urban and luxury contexts, making it desirable well beyond rural or work use. For example, Ben Fogle points to how Land Rover Defenders have gained a following amongst 'A-list' celebrities, "wealthy hedge-fund managers," and those who perceive it as a "status symbol." Fogle further declares that

[24] *Kristen Bateman, 'What's behind the Rise of the Farm-To-Fashion Aesthetic?' (Elle.com24 December 2024) <https://www.elle.com/fashion/trend-reports/a63188642/workwear-fashion-trend-2024/> accessed 14 December 2025.*
[25] *Clive Martin, 'The Unstoppable March of Barbour, for Farmers and Maga Alike' (Thetimes.com8 March 2025) <https://www.thetimes.com/life-style/fashion/article/the-unstoppable-march-of-barbour-for-farmers-and-maga-alike-0dn2xtrl8>.*
[26] *Laura Hawkins and Joy Montgomery, 'From Royal Favourite to It-Girl Staple: How the Barbour Jacket Became an Unlikely Fashion Icon' (British Vogue4 September 2023) <https://www.vogue.co.uk/gallery/beaufort-barbour-jacket-celebrities> accessed 14 December 2025.*
[27] *Laurenti Arnault and Ru Amiri, 'Male Celebrities Who Wear Barbour Jackets - Get Inspired' (The VOU26 August 2024) <https://thevou.com/blog/celebrities-who-wear-barbour-jackets/>.*

"although originally targeted at farmers, these vehicles soon became a favourite for stars of screen and stage."[28] [29]

Furthermore, an article from a 2025 edition of 'Country Life' (guest edited by the newly knighted 'Sir' David Beckham) remarked that "Land Rover's beloved, rattly old workhorse has gained a chic cachet in recent years." The article in question revolved around Beckham's fondness of Land Rover Defenders.[30]

In expanding their base, some County agricultural shows have also shifted their focus purely from livestock, farming methods, and equipment toward a post-productivist orientation emphasising leisure, commodification, and artisanal products that evoke an idealised rural lifestyle. This shift is closely linked to media outlets that display and blur the boundaries between rural and suburban. For instance, he highlights clothing stores that sell not the latest high-street fashions but durable, practical items - such as boots, Barbour jackets, and tweeds - that suit the "traditional" rural figure and suggest particular leisure and functional activities. In other contexts, it is observed that a different ethos emerges in exhibitions of historical machinery and animal husbandry, portraying the countryside as a space of skilled labour and tough, experienced approaches to livestock management and cultivation.[31]

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Animal Health and Welfare (Ban on Fox Hunting) Bill proposed in the Oireachtas exemplifies the legislative manifestation of the misperceptions outlined in this article. By framing field sports as inherently elitist and morally problematic, the Bill risks erasing the lived realities of rural working-class communities for whom hunting and related practices are not luxury pastimes, but integral elements of local economies, social networks, and cultural traditions. This mischaracterisation reflects the authority of urban-centric narratives in shaping policy, rather than an accurate understanding of historical or sociological

[28] *Felson Sajanas, 'Behind the HYPE: How the Land Rover Defender Became King of Customizable SUVs ' (Hypebeast16 May 2022) <https://hypebeast.com/2022/5/behind-the-hype-land-rover-defender>.*
[29] *Ben Fogle, Land Rover: The Story of the Car That Conquered the World : Ben Fogle : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive (Collins 2016) <https://archive.org/details/isbn_9780008221720/mode/2up> accessed 14 December 2025.*
[30] *Charles Rangeley-Wilson, 'Meet the Man Who Makes David Beckham's Land Rover Defenders '(Country Life29 October 2025) <https://www.countrylife.co.uk/luxury/motoring/meet-the-man-who-makes-david-beckhams-land-rover-defenders?> accessed 14 December 2025.*
[31] *Jesse Heley, 'Rurality, Class, Aspiration and the Emergence of the New Squirearchy '(Aberystwyth University 2008) <https://pure.aber.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/29958740/Heley_Jesse.pdf> accessed 14 December 2025.*

realities. As this article has shown, the "elitism" label is less about who has historically engaged in these practices and more about who controls the definition of their meaning today. Consequently, the legislation not only marginalises the rural working-class but also undermines the economic and communal functions these practices continue to support. A more nuanced approach, attentive to historical context and rural livelihoods, is essential if Irish law is to engage with field sports in a manner that is socially just, culturally informed, and reflective of the communities most directly affected.

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