

# Hunting with Dogs Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

## LEGISLATIVE COMPETENCE

At Introduction the Member in charge of the Bill, Mr John Blair, had made the following statement under Standing Order 30:

*“In my view the Hunting with Dogs Bill would be within the legislative competence of the Northern Ireland Assembly.”*



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A

## **BILL**

TO

Prohibit hunting wild mammals with dogs; to prohibit trail hunting; to prohibit terrier work; and to set out exemptions from these prohibitions.

**B**E IT ENACTED by being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly and assented to by His Majesty as follows:

### *Hunting with dogs*

#### **Hunting with dogs**

1. After Article 23 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 insert—

“PART 3A

5

HUNTING WITH DOGS

#### **Interpretation of this Part**

23A.—(1) For the purposes of this Part a person participates in—

- (a) hunting a wild mammal using one or more dogs,
- (b) trail hunting,
- (c) terrier work,

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whether or not the person is responsible for controlling any dog used.

(2) In paragraph (1), the reference to participation includes a reference to participation in another activity (such as pursuit by a dog of an artificial or human scent) in the course of which a dog hunts a wild mammal.

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(3) In this Part a reference to a wild mammal includes in particular—

- (a) a wild mammal that has been bred or tamed for any purpose,
- (b) a wild mammal that is or has been in captivity or confinement,
- (c) a wild mammal that has escaped or been released from captivity or confinement, and

(d) any mammal that is living wild.”

### *Offences*

#### **Hunting wild mammals using dogs**

5 2. After Article 23A of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted by section 1) insert—

#### *“Offences*

#### **Hunting wild mammals using dogs**

23B.—(1) It is an offence to—

- 10 (a) hunt a wild mammal using one or more dogs, or  
 (b) organise or participate in the hunting of a wild mammal using one or more dogs.

(2) It is an offence for the owner or occupier of land to knowingly cause or permit another person to hunt a wild mammal using one or more dogs on that land.

15 (3) But this does not apply in respect of exempt hunting (see Articles 23E to 23H).

(4) In this Part “hunting a wild mammal” includes searching for and pursuing.”

#### **Trail hunting**

20 3. After Article 23B of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted by section 2) insert—

#### **“Trail hunting**

23C.—(1) It is an offence to organise or participate in a trail hunt.

(2) But this does not apply in respect of exempt hunting (see Article 23I).

25 (3) In this Part—

“animal-based scent” means—

- (a) a scent that is derived from a wild mammal, or  
 (b) a scent that mimics, replicates or resembles the scent of a wild mammal (or which is designed to do so), whether or not that  
 30 scent is derived wholly or in part from artificial ingredients,

“trail hunt” means inducing or permitting one or more dogs to follow an animal-based scent (whether the trail of scent has been laid naturally or by human intervention).”

#### **Terrier work**

35 4. After Article 23C of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted by section 3) insert—

**“Terrier work**

**23D.**—(1) It is an offence to organise or participate in terrier work.

(2) In this Part “terrier work” means inducing one or more dogs to enter a hole in the ground, or an enclosed space, in order to—

- 5           (a) flush out or otherwise force a wild mammal to leave the hole or enclosed space, or
- (b) make it easier or quicker to dig a wild mammal out of the hole or enclosed space.”

**Penalties**

10       **5.** In Article 27 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (penalties and forfeitures) after paragraph (2) insert—

          “(2A) A person guilty of an offence under Article 23B, 23C or 23D is liable—

- 15           (a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or to a fine not exceeding £20,000, or both, and
- (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years, or to a fine, or to both.”

*Exempt hunting***Rats and mice**

20       **6.** After Article 23D of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted by section 4) insert—

*“Exempt hunting***Rats and mice**

**23E.** Article 23B does not apply in respect of the hunting of rats or mice.”

25       **Management of wild mammals above ground**

**7.** After Article 23E of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted by section 6) insert—

**“Management of wild mammals above ground**

**23F.**—(1) Article 23B does not apply if—

- 30           (a) the person hunting a wild mammal is using a dog above ground to—
- (i) search for, stalk or flush from cover a wild mammal, with the intention of killing it for one or more of the purposes set out in paragraph (2),
- 35           (ii) search for and retrieve a wild mammal which has been killed as a result of the activity mentioned head (i), and

- (b) the conditions set out in paragraph (3) are met.
- (2) Those purposes are—
- (a) preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or pasture,
- 5 (b) preventing the spread of disease,
- (c) preserving human health,
- (d) preventing serious damage to the biological diversity of an area.
- (3) Those conditions are that—
- (a) the activity does not involve the use of more than two dogs,
- 10 (b) any dog used is under control,
- (c) reasonable steps are taken to ensure that any dog used does not join with others to form a pack of more than two dogs,
- (d) permission has been given by the owner of the land on which the activity takes place,
- 15 (e) the wild mammal that is being searched for, stalked or flushed is shot dead as soon as reasonably possible,
- (f) if the attempt to kill the wild mammal, as mentioned in sub-paragraph (e), results in it being injured but not killed, reasonable steps are taken to kill it in a way (other than by using a dog) that causes it the minimum possible suffering.”
- 20

### **Relieving the suffering of injured wild mammals**

8. After Article 23F of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted by section 7) insert—

#### **“Relieving the suffering of injured wild mammals**

- 25 **23G.**—(1) Article 23B does not apply if—
- (a) the person hunting a wild mammal is using a dog above ground to search for, stalk or flush from cover a wild mammal which the person has reasonable grounds for believing is injured, with the intention of treating, capturing or killing it for the purpose of
- 30 relieving its suffering,
- (b) the wild mammal was not deliberately injured for the purpose of allowing the activity mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) to take place, and
- (c) the conditions set out in paragraph (2) are met.
- 35 (2) Those conditions are that—
- (a) the activity mentioned in paragraph (1)(a) does not involve the use of more than two dogs,
- (b) any dog used is under control,
- (c) reasonable steps are taken to ensure that any dog used does not join
- 40 with others to form a pack of more than two dogs,
- (d) either—

- (i) permission for the activity has been given by the owner of the land on which the activity takes place,
- (ii) the person carrying out the activity is a constable exercising a power of entry, or
- 5 (iii) the person carrying out the activity is a wildlife inspector exercising a power of entry under Article 25B,
- (e) the wild mammal which is being searched for, stalked or flushed is, as soon as reasonably possible, either—
  - 10 (i) given treatment to reduce or alleviate its pain or discomfort before being allowed to escape without being pursued or killed,
  - (ii) captured for the purpose of being given treatment to reduce or alleviate its pain or discomfort (whether at that place or at another place),
  - (iii) shot dead, or
  - 15 (iv) observed and allowed to escape without being pursued or killed,
- (f) if an attempt to kill the wild mammal, as mentioned in sub-paragraph (e)(iii), results in it being injured but not killed, reasonable steps are taken to kill it in a way (other than by using a dog) that causes it the minimum possible suffering.”

## 20 **Searching for dead wild mammals**

9. After Article 23G of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted by section 8) insert—

### **“Searching for dead wild mammals**

- 25 **23H.**—(1) Article 23B does not apply if—
- (a) the person hunting a wild mammal is using a dog above ground to search for and retrieve a dead wild mammal, and
  - (b) the conditions set out in paragraph (2) are met.
- (2) Those conditions are that—
- 30 (a) the activity mentioned in paragraph (1)(a) does not involve the use of more than two dogs,
  - (b) any dog used is under control,
  - (c) reasonable steps are taken to ensure that any dog used does not join with others to form a pack of more than two dogs,
  - (d) either—
    - 35 (i) permission for the activity has been given by the owner of the land on which the activity takes place,
    - (ii) the person carrying out the activity is a constable exercising a power of entry, or
    - 40 (iii) the person carrying out the activity is a wildlife inspector exercising a power of entry under Article 25B,

- (e) reasonable steps are taken to ensure that no wild mammal is pursued, injured or killed.”

### **Training dogs to follow an animal-based scent**

10. After Article 23H of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as inserted  
5 by section 9) insert—

#### **“Training dogs to follow an animal-based scent**

**23I.**—(1) Article 23C does not apply if—

(a) the person trail hunting—

10 (i) directs a dog to find and follow an animal-based scent which has been laid for that purpose, or

(ii) lays an animal-based scent for a dog to find and follow, in order to train a dog for a lawful purpose, and

(b) the conditions set out in paragraph (2) are met.

(2) Those conditions are that—

15 (a) the activity mentioned in paragraph (1)(a) does not involve more than two dogs,

(b) any dog involved in the activity is under control,

20 (c) reasonable steps are taken to ensure that any dog involved in the activity does not join with others to form a pack of more than two dogs,

(d) permission for the activity has been given by the owner of the land on which the activity takes place,

(e) reasonable steps are taken to ensure that no wild mammal is pursued, injured or killed.”

#### *Final provisions*

### **Enforcement**

11.—(1) The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 is further amended as follows.

30 (2) In Article 25 (enforcement: constables) in paragraph (1), (2), (3)(a), and (10)(a) for “an offence under Part 2 or 3” substitute “an offence under Part 2, 3 or 3A”.

(3) In Article 25B (power of wildlife inspector to enter premises), in paragraph (1), in the definition of relevant offence, for “or 15A” substitute “15A, 23B, 23C or 23D”.

35 (4) In Article 27A(1) (application to the Crown) for “Parts 2 and 3” substitute “Parts 2, 3 and 3A”.

**Review**

12. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs must review, and publish a report about, the operation of the provisions of this Act from time to time, and not less than once in each period of 5 years.

5 **Commencement**

13. This Act comes into operation at the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the day on which it receives Royal Assent.

**Short title**

10 14. This Act may be cited as the Hunting with Dogs Act (Northern Ireland) 2026.

# **Hunting with Dogs Bill**

[AS INTRODUCED]

A Bill to prohibit hunting wild mammals with dogs; to prohibit trail hunting; to prohibit terrier work; and to set out exemptions from these prohibitions.

Introduced by: Mr John Blair

On: 27 April 2026

Bill Type: Non-Executive Bill

## **ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS**

**An Explanatory and Financial Memorandum is printed separately as  
NIA Bill 33/22-27 EFM.**









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For more information please contact:

Northern Ireland Assembly  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 90 521137

Textphone: 028 90 521209

E-mail: [info@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:info@niassembly.gov.uk)