

Australian Fox Hunting Championships 2024 – Report

The 2024 Championships had 8 teams participating in total. VK3FAST, VK3AYE, VK3BES, VK3ACM, VK3OW, VK3FOX, VK5FAB and VK5TV.

Event 1 Saturday morning sniffer hunt.

From these teams there were a total of 19 participants in the sniffer hunt at the Valley Lakes on Saturday morning. Thanks to Tim VK5AV, Greg VK5ZGY, Colin VK5HCF for coming down and helping to layout the foxors. There was a mountain bike event on as well, so the entire valley lake area was not used. It was a practice day for the bikes but we didn't want to have any issues with mixing of the two events.

Bryan VK3YNG was first back, but Darian VK3FAST (team call) ended up the winner due to better results getting into the foxors.

Event 2 ARDF Style Hunt.

Four transmitters on 146.525Mhz transmitting in sequence. Thanks to Greg and Gabi for checking the boxes over and putting out the transmitters. All four worked this year, although one drifted off frequency slightly but this only affected one competitor that after tuning around, found it anyway. Reportedly one stopped modulating and only produced a carrier. Might be time to update the controllers and the radios for this event.

Not everyone found all four transmitters. VK5FAB had an equipment failure that stopped them from finding the rest. 3D printed parts are not necessarily the strongest thing to use on an antenna mount.

The theme to identify was twin towns on the Murray River. Most got the Murray River reference, nobody figured out the twin towns part.

Some issues with the event was due to lack of phone service and a high power radio in my car, I was uncontactable for most of the event. My lack of preparation was the reason for the lack of radio. However Greg and Gabi got the job done without me successfully so we owe a lot to them.

The performance of the repeater was not great as commented by the fox hunters. If we continue to hunt in this area we may need to setup some sort of temporary repeater in the middle of the competition space. The area we use in the south east is a good venue but needs some communications.

Event 3 Trevor Niven VK5NC 1296MHz hunt

Thanks to Charles HD and Linley FRED for planning the fox for this event. The navigation challenges and the pedestrian portable operation certainly challenged the competitors. 2 didn't make it in, for various reasons. 1 team heard the fox for the first time so were happy with their improvement from previous years.

Charles arranged a high capacity light weight battery for this event so there was plenty of power available and the CanTenna was in use again.

Event 4 Wayne Kilpatrick Memorial Night Hunt

Eight Teams started from the saleyards again this year. With VK5NRC (Naracoorte Radio Club) Phil VK5PCL, Alan VK5ZLT and Ross VK3KBO acting as the first 2m fox. Owen VK5HOS acting as the 70cm fox, Andrew VK5VKC as the 2m fox on the 3rd leg, Greg and Gabi VK5ZGY as the 6m fox on the 4th leg with Tim VK5AV as the 10m fox on the last leg.

The suggested positions as surveyed by Greg were quite challenging and the 10m fox location as found by Tim VK5AV was very challenging as the transmitter was not on the car and it was a long way into an area which supposedly only had one way to get to. The first team was in the final fox in around 90min, with the last team to complete in at 11:30pm. I can verify that it was entertaining to watch the antics at the 10m Fox.

One team had to go back and find their 6m antenna as it had fallen off the roof after they found the 6m fox and they needed it again the next day. VK3FAST handicapped themselves a little when they couldn't get their car started.

Event 5 70cm-2m-70cm

Only 7 Teams started this event, Bevan VK5TV overslept and missed it. First one he's missed with the acceptable excuse of a car accident. Some of the teams had a bit of slip up with hardware so the results were a little different although the better teams thought the course was a little short. Thanks go to David VK5DG, Andrew VK5VKC and Peter VK5BE and Jack VK5EBA for hiding out in the forest and playing fox.

Event 6 2m-6m-80m

Eight teams started this one. VK3FAST handicapped themselves again with a car that wouldn't start. The first two legs were relatively quick, with the exception of a couple of stragglers into 6m. Despite all the testing there was a hardware issue with 80m fox but it was rectified quickly and didn't impact proceedings. Competitors were all asked to return to the hall to check in at the completion of the event so that scoring could commence quickly. Thanks to that the scoring was completed before presentations began. A first !

Thanks again to the Naracoorte club for being the 2m fox, Greg and Gabi VK5ZGY for the 6m fox and Peter VK5BE and Jack VK5EBA for the 80m fox.

Conclusion:

Overall most of the courses were a little shorter, the ARDF event being the same. Reports from competitors were that the signals were good and they could hear them the majority of the time. The better teams did comment it was a little quick, however to cater for all skill levels there has to be some compromise.

I've mentioned the members throughout the report, but thanks to David VK5DG, Andrew VK5VKC, Owen VK5HOS, Peter VK5BE, Jack VK5EBA, Charles VK5HD, the Naracoorte Radio Club including Ross VK3KBO, Alan VK5ZLT and Phil VK5PCL, Tim VK5AV and Greg n Gabi VK5ZGY for all their efforts over the weekend and weeks leading up to the event. The weekend would not be the success it was without the support of all these members.

This was my last convention in this role for the foreseeable future. I was appreciative of all the wonderful feedback I received from both the competitors and SERG club members. The competitors did express their concern about next year so they want to come back.

I would hate to see the event fold because I'm no longer in the area so it is my hope that SERG will continue to run this event and I will do everything I can to assist. It is the Australia National Fox Hunting Championships and even though there is another event on in the north at the same time. It is a single day event and it doesn't run all the bands that we do.