

Testimony of Robert Fisk, Jr.

Founder and President of Maine Friends of Animal

IN SUPPORT OF LD 814 "An Act to Restrict the Daytime and Nighttime Killing of Coyotes"

Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

March 29, 2023

Good Morning, Senator LaFountain, Representative Scott Landry and members of the Committee.

My name is Robert Fisk, Jr. I am the founder and president of Maine Friends of Animals, championing animal protection in Maine for over 25 years. I wish to thank Representatives William, Colling, Copeland, Eaton, Geiger, Mathieson, Millet and Warren, and also Senator Grohoski, for bringing LD 814 forward to limit the coyote hunting season.

The current open daytime and night time hunting season from December 16th to August 31st is neither humane nor does it control the nuisance factor of coyotes. This indiscriminate hunting of coyotes in an open season is cruel and ineffective. An open hunting season for coyotes does not allow them the opportunity to breed and raise their young in peace. Most other furbearing animals, such as gray squirrel, bobcat, fox, racoon and snowshoe hare, have a limited hunting season, which allows the animals to breed and raise their young. The coyote breeds in late January or February and with a gestation period of 63 days, pups are born in late March to May. LD 814 would permit daytime hunting only from October 1st through March 31st allowing for the birth and nurturing of the pups.

Coyotes are opportunists and will follow the food source. Conflict occurs when humans inadvertently provide food by leaving animal carcasses, pet food, garbage or other food sources readily available to coyotes. It is essential that humans create an inhospitable environment to the coyotes by removing any food source and instilling fear by hazing them, which drives them out of the area. This works to control the population and nuisance coyotes more effectively than hunting. If you hunt and kill coyotes, they just increase reproduction. In 1850, the mass killings of coyotes began, and since that time, the coyote range has tripled. While there are nuisance coyotes, an open season does not insure they are actually eliminated.

Coyotes are territorial in nature and an alpha pair usually is the only reproducing pair. Hunting of the coyote, especially if it interferes with the breeding season, will disrupt its social structure and lead to more breeding. If one or both of the alpha pair is killed, they are immediately replaced by others, including single coyotes looking for territory and the opportunity to breed. Aggressive control of the coyote leads to earlier breeding, larger litters and more survival of pups, which just compounds the problem. Studies indicate coyotes that remain fearful of humans are less likely to become a nuisance and specifically target livestock or pets. Studies also show that the killing of coyotes does not significantly impact the survival rates of more desirable game animals such as deer. Any increase in the hunting season of coyotes will exacerbate coyote problems, not eliminate them. An extension of night time hunting does not serve a legitimate purpose. The restricting of daytime and nighttime hunting is humane and addresses coyote management in a balanced manner.

I strongly urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 814.

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