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LD 814

This letter is in support of the Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Committee advancing LD 814 to the full Legislature.

My family and I have been homesteading in Maine for 13 years, primarily raising sheep and poultry. Our current farm is 95 acres, 40 of which is open and the remainder of which is mixed woodland and wetlands. Common predators in our area are coyotes, raptors, and foxes. We wholeheartedly agree with the intent of LD 814, knowing its passage would be invaluable for Maine farmers and the ecosystems of Maine agricultural land.

We have raised our animals alongside coyotes, having experienced no predation issues at all, using a combination of 5-foot wire fencing, electrified net fencing, and a livestock guardian dog. A basic understanding of coyote biology, which is reflected in LD 814, has been critical in enabling this success.

Science has clearly demonstrated that non-persecuted coyote packs reproduce more slowly than those subject to frequent or continual hunting, and that when they are allowed to raise their pups in stable family units, parents teach pups to pursue their wild food sources, avoiding farm animals. We know through science that in coyote populations where adults are frequently killed, family units become chaotic; without the instruction of their parents, the pups grow to engage in aberrant behavior, often coming into conflict with humans. Further, we know from farmers in other regions that protecting local coyote populations—ones that are educated about farm boundaries—appears to be a successful way to prevent outside coyote packs from engaging in predation on those farms. The benefits to us and to our livestock of a healthy, secure coyote population include a reduced rodent population, increased biodiversity, and a more balanced ecosystem.

I urge you in the strongest terms to advance this bill and to allow Maine's management strategies to be led by science. An abundance of data demonstrates that what homesteaders and farmers, like us, see anecdotally is an accurate reflection of how coyotes reproduce and behave, and we have the power and the obligation to make decisions based on science, not on fear, and not on old misconceptions. This bill offers Maine the opportunity to lead the way in successful coexistence with carnivores, which will ultimately support healthy, resilient Maine farms and wildlands into the future.