

Jason Burnham
Winthrop
LD 1293

Testimony of Jason Burnham

In opposition of LD 1293, "An Act to Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests in Maine"
Committee of Inland Fisheries Wildlife
April 2, 2025

Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife,
My name is Jason Burnham and I am from Winthrop.

I strongly oppose LD 1293, "An Act to Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests in Maine" and urge you to vote ought not to pass.

While concerns have been raised regarding the ethics and efficacy of coyote hunting contests, a thorough examination of scientific research and the expertise of the MDIFW biologists suggests that such contests can play a role in managing coyote populations and mitigating their impact on other species and human activities.

Critics argue that coyote hunting contests are ineffective at controlling coyote populations, citing studies that suggest indiscriminate killing may lead to compensatory reproduction. However, targeted removal of coyotes, especially in areas where they pose significant threats to livestock or game species, has been shown to reduce localized populations and decrease predation rates. While coyotes are adaptable and resilient, strategic hunting practices, including contests, can be an effective strategy of integrated wildlife best management practices (BMP).

Opponents of hunting contests contend that indiscriminate killing disrupts ecosystem balance. While it is true that coyotes play a role in ecosystems, their overpopulation can lead to declines in affected prey species and increased conflicts with humans. Responsible management, which may include regulated hunting contests, aims to maintain a balance that supports biodiversity and reduces negative interactions. Concerns have been raised about the ethical implications of coyote hunting contests and their potential to undermine public perception of hunting. It is important to recognize that ethical hunting practices are foundational to Maine's cultural heritage. Many participants in these contests adhere to principles of fair chase and utilize the animals harvested, aligning with the broader hunting community's values of respect and stewardship for wildlife.

The MDIFW employs a team of dedicated wildlife biologists who develop and implement science-based management strategies for the state's diverse wildlife populations. Their expertise is instrumental in ensuring that predator-prey relationships remain balanced and that species such as the white-tailed deer are adequately protected from over predation.

Furthermore, MDIFW recognizes the ecological role of coyotes as adaptable predators within Maine's ecosystem. They acknowledge that, while coyotes contribute to the natural balance, their populations require careful monitoring and management to prevent negative impacts on other wildlife species and human activities.

By opposing LD 1293, we affirm our trust in MDIFW's science-driven BMPs and the expertise of their wildlife biologists. Allowing these professionals to continue their work without legislative constraints ensures that Maine's wildlife policies remain effective, ethical, and responsive to the state's unique ecological dynamics.

While it is essential to consider the ethical and ecological implications of wildlife BMPs, the outright prohibition of coyote hunting contests as proposed in LD 1293 may overlook the potential benefits these contests offer. A nuanced approach that incorporates scientific research, adaptive management strategies, and ethical hunting practices is crucial for maintaining ecological balance and supporting Maine's hunting traditions. I urge the committee to consider these perspectives and vote ought not to pass LD 1293.

Thank you

