

Chris Hodgdon
Kennebunk
LD 1293

TESTIMONY OF Chris Hodgdon

In SUPPORT of LD 1293 “An Act to Prohibit Coyote-Killing Contests in Maine”
Committee of Inland Fisheries Wildlife
April 2, 2025

Good afternoon Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and members of the Committee. My name is Chris Hodgdon, and I reside in Kennebunk.

It has been said that coyote killing contests are a necessary wildlife management tool. However, even the legislative mandated coyote impact on deer report in 1995 (LD 793) included the statement that “committing state funds and effort toward habitat conservation would, in the long-run, be far more cost-effective than engaging in widespread coyote killing campaigns.”

For those who like numbers to gauge the effectiveness of a program or activity, activities such as coyote killing contests or derbies are disappointing in that they don’t offer numbers of value. For example, one organization reported the killing of approximately 130 coyotes. What does this number mean? It’s difficult to say because simply killing a large number of coyotes under the guise of predator management without assessing the impact before or after amounts to senseless killing. Is the purpose of this large-scale killing meant to guarantee that a certain number of deer will survive? Is it meant to target pups, juveniles, and/or adults? If so, there is no guarantee that will be the end result. Hunters may be killing coyotes who are just passing through the area or wiping out or disrupting resident coyote family groups. Regardless, killing contests essentially open up territories, invite more coyotes in, and lead to an endless cycle of killing that undermines the ecological value of coyotes in Maine. A value that is also recognized by MDIFW, the agency charged with managing wildlife for all Mainers.

We do not fully recognize or understand the complexity of predator/prey relationships despite some thinking it is a black and white issue: that killing more coyotes will automatically increase the deer population, decrease conflict between humans and wildlife, or whatever the goal may be. Indiscriminately and unnecessarily killing as many individuals as possible during coyote killing contests may provide a short-term solution to what some label as a problem, but it does nothing to benefit Maine’s natural resources in the long-term.

Previous Maine coyote research was supported in part by Pittman-Robertson Act funding and MDIFW. We would be wise to invest in research to better understand Maine’s predator/prey relationships rather than allowing the outdated practice of coyote killing contests to continue.