



P.O. Box 10231
Portland, ME 04104
207-999-2323
humaneworld.org

Formerly called the Humane
Society of the United States and
Humane Society International

**Testimony in Support of LD 1293
An Act to Prohibit Coyote-killing Contests in Maine
Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
April 2, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and Members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife:

On behalf of our Maine supporters, Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States, expresses its support for LD 1293 to prohibit coyote killing contests in the state.

Wildlife killing contests are organized events in which participants compete for cash and prizes for killing the most, largest, or smallest animals within a specified time period. Killing contests in recent years in Maine include the Penobscot County Wildlife Conservation Association Coyote Contest, an Aroostook County coyote contest, the Triple Crown Hunt & Dinner (targeting coyotes, bobcats and rabbits), the Seiders Sporting Goods Coyote Hunt in Hodgdon, and the Smith's General Store coyote bounty in Springfield.

These competitions are not only incompatible with Maine's values of sportsmanship, good stewardship, and respect for wildlife, they are counterproductive and do not achieve any science-based wildlife management objective.

LD 1293 is a modest, sensible, and narrowly constructed measure that aligns with hunting ethics. Its effect would be simply to prohibit organized competitions that involve the killing of coyotes for cash and prizes. It would not otherwise restrict the take of coyotes, nor would it affect field dog trials, big buck contests or fishing tournaments, and would not prevent farmers and landowners from using lethal control to protect livestock.

Following is detailed support for our request for this committee's ought to pass vote on LD 1293:

1. Wildlife killing contests are not an effective method for managing wildlife populations.

Indiscriminate lethal control in the form of wildlife killing contests disrupts wildlife populations, disturbs ecosystem balance, and creates wildlife conflicts. More than 70 prominent conservation scientists have signed a statement in opposition to wildlife killing contests because the events serve no legitimate wildlife management purpose and are, in fact, counterproductive to that objective.¹

Killing contests can increase coyote populations. It is well-established, based on the best available scientific evidence, that indiscriminate killing of coyotes in an attempt to control their numbers is ineffective and in fact can have the opposite effect. Science demonstrates that indiscriminate lethal control disrupts coyote social structure which, ironically, encourages more breeding and migration, and ultimately results in more coyotes.² And in late 2024, new research affirmed this by stating, "These

¹ "Statement in Opposition to Wildlife Killing Contests: Signed by more than 70 conservation scientists," Project Coyote (2020), http://www.projectcoyote.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SAB-Letter-Against-WKCs_FINAL_2021.01.13.pdf

² F. F. Knowlton, E. M. Gese, and M. M. Jaeger, "Coyote Depredation Control: An Interface between Biology and Management," *Journal of Range Management* 52, no. 5 (1999); Robert Crabtree and Jennifer Sheldon, "Coyotes and Canid Coexistence in Yellowstone," in *Carnivores in Ecosystems: The Yellowstone Experience*, ed. T. Clark et

findings expand results from local studies suggesting that directly hunting coyotes does not decrease their abundance and may actually increase it.”³

The science is clear: randomly killing coyotes does not reduce their populations. In fact, since 1850 when mass killings of coyotes began, the range of coyotes has tripled in the United States.⁴ The indiscriminate lethal control disrupts coyote social structure which, ironically, encourages more breeding and migration, and ultimately results in more coyotes.⁵ The alpha pair, often the parents of different aged offspring, are typically the pack’s only reproducers. When one or both members of the alpha pair are killed, the survivor will find a new mate, and the remaining members of the pack, who had been behaviorally sterile, will now also mate, increasing the number of breeding pairs. At the same time, lone coyotes will move in to mate, young coyotes will start having offspring sooner, and litter sizes will grow.⁶

Many state wildlife agencies have noted this phenomenon. Regarding coyote killing contests specifically, Vermont Fish & Wildlife states, “. . .we do not believe such short-term hunts will have any measurable impact on regulating coyote populations[.]” The Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources says, “Trapping and removing coyotes will only result in new coyotes moving in to occupy empty territories. Efforts to eradicate coyotes can actually increase their numbers: females may breed at younger ages and give birth to larger litters. The survival rate of pups may increase due to less competition for food.”⁷ The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has found, “Removing coyotes for the purpose of eradication is an inefficient and ineffective method to control populations. New coyotes move into areas where others have been removed. Removal activities such as hunting and trapping place pressure on coyote populations, and the species responds by reproducing at a younger age and producing more pups per litter; populations can quickly return to their original size.”⁸ The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources states, “The coyote is an adaptable predator that despite years of persecution has survived and even expanded their range. . . . Although bounties have been liberally used on coyotes in the west, no bounty system has ever worked.”⁹ The Missouri Department of Conservation has concluded, “Under heavy pressure, furbearers will move or mate at an earlier age and have larger litters. Reduce the population of one predator and others may spike.”¹⁰ And finally, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources notes, “[W]hen a coyote is removed from an area it is likely that another coyote will take its place.”¹¹

In 2018 the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission published its Coyote Management Plan, which was developed using a large body of scientific and peer-reviewed literature. The plan concluded that indiscriminate, lethal methods of controlling coyotes—including bounty programs, which are similar in effect to wildlife killing contests—are ineffective and counterproductive, that coyotes provide benefits to

al.(New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1999); J. M. Goodrich and S. W. Buskirk, "Control of Abundant Native Vertebrates for Conservation of Endangered Species," *Conservation Biology* 9, no. 6 (1995).

³ Moll, R.J., Green, A.M., Allen, M.L. and Kays, R. (2025), People or predators? Comparing habitat-dependent effects of hunting and large carnivores on the abundance of North America’s top mesocarnivore. *Ecography*, 2025: e07390. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecog.07390>

⁴ Robert Crabtree and Jennifer Sheldon, "Coyotes and Canid Coexistence in Yellowstone," in *Carnivores in Ecosystems: The Yellowstone Experience*, ed. T. Clark et al.(New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1999)

⁵ F. F. Knowlton, E. M. Gese, and M. M. Jaeger, "Coyote Depredation Control: An Interface between Biology and Management," *Journal of Range Management* 52, no. 5 (1999); Robert Crabtree and Jennifer Sheldon, "Coyotes and Canid Coexistence in Yellowstone," in *Carnivores in Ecosystems: The Yellowstone Experience*, ed. T. Clark et al.(New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 1999); J. M. Goodrich and S. W. Buskirk, "Control of Abundant Native Vertebrates for Conservation of Endangered Species," *Conservation Biology* 9, no. 6 (1995).

⁶ Knowlton, F.F. 1972. Preliminary interpretations of coyote population mechanics with some management implications. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 36:369-382.

⁷ Kentucky Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources, *Coyotes in the Suburbs*. Available at: <https://fw.ky.gov/Wildlife/Documents/KASpring17coyotes.pdf>

⁸ "Coyotes: Living with Coyotes," Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, available at <https://myfwc.com/conservation/you-protect/wildlife/coyotes/>.

⁹ "Eastern Coyote Impacts Of The Eastern Coyote On Wildlife Populations, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, available at <http://www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/CoyoteResearch.shtml>.

¹⁰ White, Bill. "The Bounty Hunter," Missouri Department of Conservation, (Aug. 21, 2012), available at <https://mdc.mo.gov/blogs/more-quail/bounty-hunter>.

¹¹ "Coyotes," Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, available at <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/urbancoyote.html>.

humans and ecosystems (even outside of their historic range), and that non-lethal measures are the best way to address conflicts with coyotes.¹² The agency stated that, “numerous bounty program case studies have led to conclusions that bounties are ineffective in achieving real declines of predators (including coyotes), at addressing livestock depredation, or at positively affecting populations of species targeted for protection.” It further noted that killing coyotes in bounty programs may have undesirable effects, such as increasing prey species viewed as pests and killing non-offending coyotes, which creates a niche vacancy for coyotes that have learned to prey on livestock. This phenomenon has been documented in other research studies.¹³

2. The indiscriminate killing of coyotes will not reduce livestock conflicts—and may increase them.

Killing contest proponents have claimed, without evidence, that killing contests are needed to reduce conflicts with livestock. But research finds that coyote packs exploited by random killing are more likely to have increased numbers of yearlings reproducing and higher pup survival. Feeding pups is a significant motivation for coyotes to switch from killing small and medium-sized prey to killing sheep.¹⁴ Killing contests also do not target specific, problem-causing coyotes. Instead, they kill coyotes in woodlands and grasslands who are keeping to themselves—not those who have become habituated to human food sources such as livestock carcasses.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management emphasizes this by noting:

It has been repeatedly proven that removing coyotes to reduce the size of a population results in the opposite outcome. Fewer coyotes means more available territories and less competition for food. With this increase in resources, the surviving coyotes produce larger litters, resulting in population growth. Removing human-subsidized food resources, combined with regulated hunting and trapping, is the most effective way to manage coyote populations.¹⁵

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (DNR) affirms, “Predator control of coyotes because of wildlife predation is unwarranted and unnecessary.”¹⁶ And the New York DEC adds, “The random removal of coyotes from a population will not reduce or eliminate predation on livestock.”¹⁷

Prevention—not lethal control—is the best method for minimizing conflicts with coyotes.¹⁸ The New York DEC notes, “Most problems can be avoided with proper husbandry techniques. It is much easier to prevent depredation from occurring than it is to stop it once it starts.”¹⁹ It also states, “There is little benefit

¹² Coyote Management Plan. (Mar. 1, 2018). North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission at: https://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Species/Coyote%20Management%20Plan_FINAL_030118.pdf.

¹³ Randy Comeleo, “Using Coyotes to Protect Livestock. Wait. What?,” Oregon State University: OSU Extension Service (June 2018), <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/animals-livestock/sheep-goats/using-coyotes-protect-livestock-wait-what>

¹⁴ F. F. Knowlton, E. M. Gese, and M. M. Jaeger, “Coyote Depredation Control: An Interface between Biology and Management,” *Journal of Range Management* 52, no. 5 (1999); B. R. Mitchell, M. M. Jaeger, and R. H. Barrett, “Coyote Depredation Management: Current Methods and Research Needs,” *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 32, no. 4 (2004).

¹⁵ RI DEM/Fish & Wildlife factsheet “Eastern Coyote,” *supra* note 3.

¹⁶ “Eastern Coyote Impacts Of The Eastern Coyote On Wildlife Populations,” West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, <https://www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/CoyoteResearch.shtm>

¹⁷ New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. (June 1991). *The Status and Impact of Eastern Coyotes in Northern New York*, <https://storage.googleapis.com/wzukusers/user-35074691/documents/294a1d6c3fb34f379e50eace085509df/coyotes.pdf>

¹⁸ Gehrt, S.D., Anchor, C., and White, L.A.: “Home Range and Landscape Use of Coyotes in a Metropolitan Landscape: Conflict or Coexistence?” *Journal of Mammalogy* 90(5):1045-1057. 2009; Poessel, S.A., Breck, S.W., Gese, E.M.: “Spatial ecology of coyotes in the Denver metropolitan area: influence of the urban matrix,” *Journal of Mammalogy* 97 (5): 1414-1427, 2016.

¹⁹ “Coyote Conflicts,” New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6971.html>

to be gained from only trapping or shooting coyotes at large.”²⁰ Practicing good animal husbandry and using strategic nonlethal predator control methods to protect livestock (such as birthing cattle and sheep in barns or sheds and employing electric fences, guard animals, and removing dead livestock) are more effective than indiscriminate lethal control.²¹

Furthermore, while conflicts do happen, common arguments regarding the impact of predator-livestock conflict are exaggerated. As New Hampshire Fish and Game notes, “The great majority of coyotes don’t prey upon livestock.”²² According to U.S. Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) data, livestock losses to wild carnivores are minuscule. In 2015, U.S. cattle and sheep inventories (including calves and lambs) numbered approximately 118.8 million animals.²³ Of that total, 474,965 cattle and sheep (including lambs and calves) were lost *to all carnivores combined* (including coyotes, unknown predators, and dogs), or 0.39 percent of the inventory.²⁴ The predominant sources of mortality to livestock—*by far*—are non-predator causes including disease, illness, birthing problems, and weather.²⁵ The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has concluded that, based on USDA data, domestic dogs are an equal or greater risk to sheep, goats, and cattle, compared to coyotes.²⁶

Regarding anecdotal accounts of coyote predation of pets, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife has stated, “Although people often blame coyotes when a pet goes missing or is found dead, many other animals – including dogs cats, bears, fishers, bobcats and foxes – could be responsible, as well as vehicles, disease, weather or even furious neighbors.”²⁷

3. The indiscriminate killing of coyotes will not increase populations of game species.

Killing carnivores like coyotes with the goal of increasing game species abundance, including populations of deer and elk, small game animals, and game birds, is unlikely to produce positive results because the key to their survival is protecting breeding females and ensuring herds have access to adequate nutrition—not preventing predation.²⁸ A 2019 study that evaluated deer hunting numbers in six eastern

²⁰ New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. (June 1991). *The Status and Impact of Eastern Coyotes in Northern New York*, <https://storage.googleapis.com/wzukusers/user-35074691/documents/294a1d6c3fb34f379e50eace085509df/coyotes.pdf>

²¹ Adrian Treves et al., “Forecasting Environmental Hazards and the Application of Risk Maps to Predator Attacks on Livestock,” *BioScience* 61, no. 6 (2011); Philip J. Baker et al., “Terrestrial Carnivores and Human Food Production: Impact and Management,” *Mammal Review* 38, (2008); A. Treves and K. U. Karanth, “Human-Carnivore Conflict and Perspectives on Carnivore Management Worldwide,” *Conservation Biology* 17, no. 6 (2003); J. A. Shivik, A. Treves, and P. Callahan, “Nonlethal Techniques for Managing Predation: Primary and Secondary Repellents,” *Conservation Biology* 17, no. 6 (2003); N. J. Lance et al., “Biological, Technical, and Social Aspects of Applying Electrified Fladry for Livestock Protection from Wolves (*Canis Lupus*),” *Wildlife Research* 37, no. 8 (2010); Andrea Morehouse and Mark Boyce, “From Venison to Beef: Seasonal Changes in Wolf Diet Composition in a Livestock Grazing Environment,” *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 9, no. 8 (2011).

²² “Eastern Coyote (*Canis latrans var.*),” New Hampshire Fish and Game, <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife/profiles/coyote.html>.

²³ See USDA. 2015. “Cattle and Calves Death Loss in the United States Due to Predator and Nonpredator Causes, 2015.” USDA–APHIS–VS–CEAH, available at:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahms/general/downloads/cattle_calves_deathloss_2015.pdf; USDA.

2015. “Sheep and Lamb Predator and Nonpredator Death Loss in the United States, 2015.” USDA–APHIS–VS–CEAH–NAHMS, available at

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahms/sheep/downloads/sheepdeath/SheepDeathLoss2015.pdf

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ For an in-depth discussion, see: Wendy Keefover, “Northern Rocky Mountain Wolves: A Public Policy Process Failure: How Two Special Interest Groups Hijacked Wolf Conservation in America,” *WildEarth Guardians* 1, no. 1 (2012).

²⁶ Coyote Management Plan. (Mar. 1, 2018). North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission: 10.

²⁷ Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, *supra* note 7.

²⁸ Bishop, C. J., G. C. White, D. J. Freddy, B. E. Watkins, and T. R. Stephenson. 2009. Effect of Enhanced Nutrition on Mule Deer Population Rate of Change. *Wildlife Monographs*:1-28; Hurley, M. A., J. W. Unsworth, P. Zager, M. Hebblewhite, E. O. Garton, D. M. Montgomery, J. R. Skalski, and C. L. Maycock. 2011. Demographic Response of Mule Deer to Experimental Reduction of Coyotes and Mountain Lions in Southeastern Idaho. *Wildlife Monographs*:1-33; Forrester, T. D. and H. U. Wittmer. 2013. A review of the population dynamics of mule deer and black-tailed deer *Odocoileus hemionus* in North America. *Mammal Review* 43:292-308.; Monteith, K. L., V. C. Bleich, T. R.

U.S. states (New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and Ohio) found that coyotes are not limiting deer numbers and that coyote removal programs do little to increase deer in the region.²⁹

With regard to killing contests, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has stated, "...we do not believe such short-term hunts will have any measurable impact on regulating coyote populations, nor will they bolster populations of deer or other game species."³⁰ The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources found "no scientific evidence to support claims that predator hunting contests . . . increase populations of game species."³¹ The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources says, "The addition of the coyote to the ecosystem can change ecological balances of predator and prey species, but it will not eliminate other species from the environment."³² Comprehensive studies in Colorado³³ and Idaho³⁴ show that killing native carnivores fails to grow deer herds.

In response to hunters' concerns about the effect of coyotes on small game species, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has stated, "After decades of using predator control (such as paying bounties) with no effect, and the emergence of wildlife management as a science, the agency finally accepted the reality that predator control does not work."³⁵ Regarding the impact of coyotes specifically on small game populations, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, citing a long list of studies, found that coyotes are beneficial to a wide array of game bird species, including ducks and quail, because they suppress populations of smaller mammals, including feral cats, opossums, raccoons, red foxes, and skunks, and lessen their effects on other species, including birds. It also found that "most coyote diet studies document low to no prevalence of wild turkey or other gamebirds in diets."³⁶

Ducks Unlimited states, "Predator control cannot result in meaningful increases in duck numbers or birds in the bag and threatens to undermine the broad coalition of public support on which modern waterfowl conservation depends."³⁷ And the National Wild Turkey Federation concludes, "Ultimately, the long-term solution to wild turkey populations is not dependent on predator control, but on man's activities and good habitat management."³⁸

Science demonstrates that the primary factor affecting the survival of game species, whether big or small game or land or water species, is habitat. Staff for the Missouri Department of Conservation have put it bluntly: "It's much easier to point the finger at the big, bad coyote, evil bobcat, rugged red-tailed hawk or rascally raccoon than look at habitat conditions that affect the nesting success of quail, turkey and other early successional wildlife."³⁹

Stephenson, B. M. Pierce, M. M. Conner, J. G. Kie, and R. T. Bowyer. 2014. Life-history characteristics of mule deer: Effects of nutrition in a variable environment. *Wildlife Monographs* 186:1-62.

²⁹ Eugenia V. Bragina, Roland Kays, Allison Hody, Christopher E. Moorman, Christopher S. Deperno, L. Scott Mills (2019), Effects on white-tailed deer following eastern coyote colonization. *Jour. Wild. Mgmt.*, 83: 916-924. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jwmg.21651>

³⁰ "Eastern Coyote Issues – A Closer Look," Vermont Fish & Wildlife, January 2017 at www.vtfishandwildlife.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_73079/File/Hunt/trapping/Eastern-Coyote-Position-Statement.pdf

³¹ *Id.*

³² The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources: "Eastern Coyote Impacts Of The Eastern Coyote On Wildlife Populations."

³³ Bishop, C. J., G. C. White, D. J. Freddy, B. E. Watkins, and T. R. Stephenson. 2009. Effect of Enhanced Nutrition on Mule Deer Population Rate of Change. *Wildlife Monographs*:1-28.

³⁴ Hurley, M. A., J. W. Unsworth, P. Zager, M. Hebblewhite, E. O. Garton, D. M. Montgomery, J. R. Skalski, and C. L. Maycock. 2011. Demographic Response of Mule Deer to Experimental Reduction of Coyotes and Mountain Lions in Southeastern Idaho. *Wildlife Monographs*:1-33.

³⁵ Frye, Bob. (July 25, 2016). "Habitat, not predators, seen as key to wildlife populations," *Trib Live*, <http://triblive.com/sports/outdoors/10756490-74/game-predator-predators>.

³⁶ Coyote Management Plan. (Mar. 1, 2018). North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission: 16.

³⁷ Chuck Petrie: "Prairies Under Siege: Ducks, Habitat Conservation & Predators," in the November/December 2003 *Ducks Unlimited* magazine. <https://www.ducks.org/conservation/where-ducks-unlimited-works/prairie-pothole-region/prairies-under-siege-ducks-habitat-conservation-predators>.

³⁸ James Earl Kenamer, Ph.D. "Wild Turkeys and Predators." The National Wild Turkey Federation, August 25, 2021 at www.nwtf.org/content-hub/wild-turkeys-and-predators

³⁹ Bill White, "The Bounty Hunter," *More Quail*, Missouri Department of Conservation, August 21, 2012, <https://mdc.mo.gov/blogs/more-quail/bounty-hunter>.

4. **Hunters and wildlife agency professionals across the nation have condemned killing contests as unsporting and scientifically unfounded and have expressed concerns that they threaten the very future of hunting.**⁴⁰

Some recent examples include:

- In support of a proposed rule to ban contests, the **Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources** said in 2021, “[There is a] misconception that predator killing contests provide benefits to the public and other wildlife species.”⁴¹ The agency found “no scientific evidence to support claims that predator hunting contests reduce predator numbers, reduce livestock damage, or increase populations of game species (possible exception on heavily hunted individual farms).” It stated “the primary concern of staff is [the] possible negative effects on public views of hunting in general.”
- **Vermont Fish and Wildlife** stated in 2018 that “[c]oyote hunting contests are not only ineffective at controlling coyote populations, but these kinds of competitive coyote hunts are raising concerns on the part of the public and could possibly jeopardize the future of hunting and affect access to private lands for all hunters.”⁴²
- In support of its ban on wildlife killing contests, the **Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife** concluded in 2019 that “public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting and undermine public support for hunting in general[.]”⁴³
- Tony Wasley, hunter, former director of the **Nevada Department of Wildlife**, and former president of the **Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies**, said in 2021: “Killing contests are ethically upsetting for most members of society. Hunting should not be a competition as such behavior ultimately degrades the value of life and undermines respect for the animals being hunted. . . . In my ethics as a hunter I hope to defend a deeper and more profound sense of hunting than what I fear coyote contests say to the general public about hunters and our ethics.”⁴⁴
- The **Arizona Game and Fish Commission** similarly advised in 2019 that “[t]o the extent these contests reflect on the overall hunting community, public outrage with these events has the potential to threaten hunting as a legitimate wildlife management function.”⁴⁵
- Jim Zieler, hunter and former chair of the **Arizona Game & Fish Commission**, said in 2019, “There has been a lot of social outcry against this, and you can kind of understand why. It’s difficult to stand up and defend a practice like this. It’s just not enough to say, ‘Science will tell us it doesn’t have a significant impact on the predator population.’”⁴⁶
- In support of a ban on killing contests, Kelly Susewind, director of **Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife**, said in 2020: “part of my job, and frankly part of my soul, is to promote hunting, to

⁴⁰ Humane World for Animals: “Wildlife management professionals and hunters on wildlife killing contests and predator control” at https://www.humaneworld.org/sites/default/files/docs/HSUS_Statements-wildlife-killing-contests.pdf

⁴¹ Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, “Predator Hunting Contest Information Presentation,” DWR Board Meeting (May 27, 2021), <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/media/05272021-Board-Meeting-Materials.pdf>

⁴² Vermont Fish & Wildlife, Eastern Coyote Issues – A Closer Look (Jan. 2017) at

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Hunt/trapping/Eastern-Coyote-Position-Statement.pdf>

⁴³ Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, “Proposed Regulations to Ban Predator Contests and Prohibit Wanton Waste,” July 25, 2019 <https://www.mass.gov/news/masswildlife-proposes-regulations-to-ban-predator-contests-and-prohibit-wanton-waste>

⁴⁴ 2021 Nevada Department of Wildlife November Wildlife Commission Meeting, Nov. 5, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELXWyYLr_f8

⁴⁵ Arizona Game and Fish Commission, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Title 12. Natural Resources Chapter 4. Available at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/azgfd-portal-wordpress/azgfd.wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/25093742/R12-4-303-NPRM.pdf>.

⁴⁶ “Coyote-killing contests face growing outrage, state bans,” Washington Post, May 17, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2019/05/17/predator-hunting-contests-face-bans-amid-backlash-several-states/>

get our youth hunting, to really have this be a core piece of what our society supports. And frankly, that job is a lot harder if we're condoning these types of contests."⁴⁷

- Also in support of Washington's ban on killing contests, **Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission** member Brad Smith said in 2020: "I am a hunter, I'll clarify that, and I've never perceived hunting as a contest. I think these are not hunting contests, they're killing contests."⁴⁸
- Dan Gibbs, hunter and executive director of the **Colorado Department of Natural Resources**, stated in 2020: "For me, hunting contests don't sit well. As a sportsman I'd never participate in one personally. Hunting is an important reverent tradition in Colorado and powerful management tool but I also think wildlife killing contests give sportsmen and sportswomen a bad name and damage our reputation."⁴⁹
- Michael Sutton, hunter and former president of the **California Fish and Game Commission**, said in 2014, "Awarding prizes for wildlife killing contests is both unethical and inconsistent with our current understanding of natural systems. Such contests are an anachronism and have no place in modern wildlife management."⁵⁰
- Mike Finley, former chair of the **Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission**, stated: "Killing large numbers of predators as part of an organized contest or competition is inconsistent with sound, science-based wildlife management and antithetical to the concepts of sportsmanship and fair chase."⁵¹ He also called the contests "slaughter fests" and "stomach-turning examples of wanton waste."⁵²

Other professionals have similarly acknowledged the lack of sportsmanship and science-based wildlife management principles behind these contests:

- In a 2021 resolution,⁵³ the **Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America** said, "wildlife killing contests have the potential to threaten the future of hunting in general; and damage the reputation of Minnesota's sportsmen and sportswomen who recognize hunting wildlife as a privilege worthy of the highest ethical standards of pursuit."
- In its position statement on wildlife killing contests, **The Wildlife Society**, which promotes science-based management and conservation, urges professionals and managers in the field to "[r]ecognize that while species killed in contests can be legally killed in most states, making a contest of it may undermine the public's view of ethical hunting."⁵⁴
- Ted Chu, former wildlife manager with **Idaho Fish and Game**, has stated: "Hunting is not a contest and it should never be a competitive activity about who can kill the most or the biggest animals."⁵⁵
- Ray Powell, the former **New Mexico Commissioner of State Lands**, said: "The non-specific, indiscriminate killing methods used in this commercial and unrestricted coyote killing contest are not

⁴⁷ Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting, August 1, 2020

<https://www.tw.wa.gov/watch/?eventID=2020081003>

⁴⁸ Washington State Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting, August 1, 2020

<https://www.tw.wa.gov/watch/?eventID=2020081003>

⁴⁹ Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission Meeting, April 30, 2020

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vv7x_gx5PY

⁵⁰ Ted Williams, "Coyote Carnage: The Gruesome Truth about Wildlife Killing Contests," *Yale Environment 360*, May 22, 2018 <https://e360.yale.edu/features/coyote-carnage-the-gruesome-truth-about-wildlife-killing-contests>

⁵¹ Testimony by Mike Finley to the Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee, March 18, 2019. Available at:

<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2019R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/200547>

⁵² Todd Wilkinson, *A Death of Ethics: is hunting destroying itself?*, Mountain Journal, Dec. 12, 2018. Available at:

<https://mountainjournal.org/hunting-in-america-faces-an-ethical-reckoning>

⁵³ "Resolution to Oppose the Indiscriminate Killing of Wildlife in the Form of Wildlife Killing Contests," Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League (May 1, 2021), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xSPd6-aW1dxO7s2aYCNxpzQWeTtEVBIJ/view>

⁵⁴ The Wildlife Society: "Issue Statement: Wildlife Killing Contests." Approved March 7, 2019 https://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/TWS_IS_WildlifeKillingContest_ApprovedMarch2019.pdf

⁵⁵ Todd Wilkinson, *Shoot biggest wolf, win trophy and cash*, Jackson Hole News & Guide, Dec. 18, 2013. Available at: https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/opinion/columnists/the_new_west_todd_wilkinson/article_260cbc66-0bf6-544b-bcf2-b5e9220247bb.html

about hunting or sound land management. These contests are about personal profit, animal cruelty. . . . It is time to outlaw this highly destructive activity.”⁵⁶

- The late Jim Posewitz, biologist with the **Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks** and author of *Beyond Fair Chase: The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting* and *Inherit the Hunt: A Journey into American Hunting*, stated, “Competitive killing seems to lack the appreciation of and the respect for wildlife fundamental to any current definition of an ethical hunter.”⁵⁷

These important voices from this field have made clear that wildlife killing contests not only contravene the best available science and have no subsistence or conservation purpose, but ultimately harm the reputation of the hunting community. They also flout the respected tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation—namely, that wildlife resources are conserved and held in trust for all citizens; commerce in dead wildlife is eliminated; wildlife may only be killed for a legitimate, nonfrivolous purpose; and that scientific management is the proper means for wildlife conservation.⁵⁸

5. Ten U.S. states—including four of Maine’s Eastern neighbors—have now banned wildlife killing contests due to public opposition.

The **California** Game and Fish Commission first prohibited the offering of prizes for contests that target furbearer and nongame species in 2014 by a vote of 4-1. The **Vermont** and **New Mexico** legislatures banned coyote killing contests in 2018 and 2019, respectively. In 2019, the **Arizona** Game and Fish Commission voted unanimously to prohibit killing contests for furbearer and predator species, and later that year the **Massachusetts** Fisheries and Wildlife Board voted 6-1 to pass a similar ban. In 2020, the **Colorado** Parks and Wildlife Board voted 8-3 to ban killing contests for small game and furbearer species such as coyotes and prairie dogs, and the **Washington** Fish and Wildlife Commission voted 7-2 to approve its own proposed ban on wildlife killing contests for species including bobcats, foxes, coyotes, crows and raccoons. In 2021, the **Maryland** legislature passed a prohibition on killing contests for coyotes, foxes and raccoons by a landslide vote. And in 2023 the **Oregon** Fish and Wildlife Commission voted unanimously to ban wildlife killing contests, followed by the **New York** legislature 2 months later.

6. Wildlife killing contests remove vital wildlife species that help balance ecosystems and provide free, natural ecological services to Maine’s communities.

All wildlife species play integral roles in healthy ecosystems. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management notes that following the eradication of large carnivores like wolves and mountain lions in the Eastern U.S., “Coyotes now play an important role in controlling rodent and small mammal populations, a niche that needed to be filled.”⁵⁹ Indeed, both coyotes and foxes help to control disease transmission by keeping rodent populations in check, which curtails tick-borne diseases like Lyme.⁶⁰ This is particularly significant because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have ranked Maine as among the top 10 states for the number of reported cases of Lyme disease.⁶¹ In addition, coyotes consume carrion, increase biodiversity, remove sick animals from the gene pool, and disperse seeds. Coyotes have trophic cascade effects such as indirectly protecting ground-nesting birds from smaller carnivores and increasing the biological diversity of plant and wildlife communities.⁶²

⁵⁶ Ray Powell, Letter to Mark Chavez, owner of Gunhawk Firearms, Nov. 15, 2012.

⁵⁷ Karen E. Lange, “Better off alive” All Animals (Sept. 1, 2018) at <https://www.humanesociety.org/news/better-alive>

⁵⁸ “The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation,” <https://www.fishwildlife.org/landing/north-american-model-wildlife-conservation>

⁵⁹ See the RI DEM/Fish & Wildlife factsheet “Eastern Coyote” at <https://dem.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkqbur861/files/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/coyote.pdf>

⁶⁰ Fox, C.H. and C.M. Papouchis. 2005. Coyotes in Our Midst: Coexisting with an Adaptable and Resilient Carnivore. Animal Protection Institute, Sacramento, California. http://www.projectcoyote.com/Coyotes_In_Our_Midst.pdf

⁶¹ Centers for Disease Control: Lyme Disease — Top 10 States for Number of Reported Cases by Year, United States at https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/data-research/facts-stats/surveillance-data-1.html#cdc_data_surveillance_section_1-interactive-data

⁶² S. E. Henke and F. C. Bryant, “Effects of Coyote Removal on the Faunal Community in Western Texas,” *Journal of Wildlife Management* 63, no. 4 (1999); K. R. Crooks and M. E. Soule, “Mesopredator Release and Avifaunal Extinctions in a Fragmented System,” *Nature* 400, no. 6744 (1999); E. T. Mezquida, S. J. Slater, and C. W. Benkman, “Sage-Grouse and Indirect Interactions: Potential Implications of Coyote Control on Sage-Grouse Populations,”

Coyotes also benefit farmers. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife has said, “Coyotes also benefit farmers and other property owners by helping control populations of mice, rats, voles, moles, and woodchucks.”⁶³ According to New Hampshire Fish and Game, “[W]hen farms are situated in a coyote territory with no depredation, the resident coyote may actually be an asset to the farm by removing rodents and preventing problem coyotes from moving into the area.”⁶⁴ And as the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife explains, “If your property is the home territory of coyotes that don’t harm livestock, they will keep away other coyotes that are potential livestock killers. Coyotes also benefit ranchers and other property owners by helping control populations of mice, rats, voles, moles, gophers, rabbits, and hares.”⁶⁵ Other state agencies including Wisconsin⁶⁶ and Oregon⁶⁷ agree.

Coyotes also help keep deer and other game species populations healthy. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency puts it simply: “[Coyotes] eat old, sick, or injured wild animals unable to survive.”⁶⁸ As the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) states, coyote “predation may improve the overall health of the prey population” through “isolation and removal of prey with contagious diseases or parasites” and “[alleviation of] prey population pressure on limited food supplies during critical periods.”⁶⁹ The wildlife agencies in North Carolina,⁷⁰ Vermont,⁷¹ West Virginia,⁷² Wisconsin,⁷³ and Wyoming have made similar statements.⁷⁴

Finally, the longstanding and highly respected hunting group the Izaak Walton League of America says, “The League recognizes the intrinsic value of predatory species and their important ecological roles. . . . There is no justification for widespread destruction of animals classified as predators The League opposes payment of bounties on predators or varmints.”⁷⁵

7. Wildlife killing contests are cruel and unsporting

Condor 108, no. 4 (2006); N. M. Waser et al., “Coyotes, Deer, and Wildflowers: Diverse Evidence Points to a Trophic Cascade,” *Naturwissenschaften* 101, no. 5 (2014).

⁶³ Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. “Coyote.” <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fish-wildlife/wildlife/living-withwildlife/avoid-resolve-conflict/coyotes.html> (link no longer active)

⁶⁴ “Eastern Coyote (*Canis latrans* var.),” New Hampshire Fish and Game, <https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife/profiles/coyote.html>

⁶⁵ “Living with Wildlife,” Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/coyotes.html>.

⁶⁶ Tami Ryan, “A howl over coyotes,” *Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine*, December 1999, <https://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/html/stories/1999/dec99/coyote.htm#:~:text=Coyotes%20live%20in%20every%20Wisconsin,the%20southern%20and%20western%20portions.>

⁶⁷ “Living with Wildlife: Coyotes,” Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, https://www.dfw.state.or.us/wildlife/living_with/docs/living_with_coyotes.pdf

⁶⁸ “Controlling Coyotes in Tennessee,” Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (January 2003), available at <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/twra/documents/mammals/coyotecontrol.pdf>

⁶⁹ “The Status and Impact of Eastern Coyotes in Northern New York,” New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (June 1991), page 7-8, available at <https://storage.googleapis.com/wzukusers/user-35074691/documents/294a1d6c3fb34f379e50eace085509df/coyotes.pdf>

⁷⁰ North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Coyote Management Plan (2018). Available at: www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Species/Coyote%20Management%20Plan_FINAL_030118.pdf

⁷¹ Vermont Fish & Wildlife, Eastern Coyote Issues – A Closer Look (Jan. 2017). Available at: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Hunt/trapping/Eastern-Coyote-Position-Statement.pdf>.

⁷² “Eastern Coyote Impacts Of The Eastern Coyote On Wildlife Populations, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, available at <http://www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/CoyoteResearch.shtm>.

⁷³ Tami Ryan, “A howl over coyotes,” *Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine*, December 1999, <https://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/html/stories/1999/dec99/coyote.htm#:~:text=Coyotes%20live%20in%20every%20Wisconsin,the%20southern%20and%20western%20portions.>

⁷⁴ Dave Rippe, “Predator Control and Wildlife,” Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Habitat Extension Services, July 1995, <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Habitat/Extension%20Bulletins/B57-Predator-Control-and-Wildlife.pdf>.

⁷⁵ The Izaak Walton League of America: “Conservation Policies 2022,” pg. 54 <https://www.iwla.org/docs/default-source/about-iwla/2022-policy-book-final.pdf>

These contests promote gratuitous violence, and send the message that killing is fun, animals are disposable, and life is cheap. To achieve the goal of slaughtering as many animals as possible, participants use high-tech equipment—which can include, depending on state laws and regulations, semi-automatic weapons, night vision, thermal imaging, lights and electronic calling devices—that gives them an unfair advantage over the animals and violates the longstanding hunting ethic of fair chase. The very nature of these contests—in which participants are motivated by financial rewards to kill as many or the heaviest animals as allowed over a designated time period—increases the likelihood that participants will fail to abide by the rules and values embraced by responsible hunters. Furthermore, the animals are not killed for their meat and the high-powered guns tear holes through the animals' bodies, rendering even the fur useless. The wanton waste of life is astounding.

Killing contest participants display an utter lack of respect for the animals they kill. Photos plastered on social media show contestants grinning next to piles of bloodied animals and showing off their prizes. A 2020 investigation by Humane World for Animals of a killing contest in New York showed coyotes killed in the competition tossed inside and outside of dumpsters.⁷⁶ Other investigation and online footage shows animals carelessly thrown into heaps, with their guts often spilling out and the ground covered in a thick layer of blood, piled into trucks, and hung upside down from railings and barn walls, apparently to show off the massive number of animals killed. Children are often encouraged to participate in the carnage.⁷⁷

8. Allowing killing contests is an abdication of Maine's solemn duty to protect the public's wildlife for all residents.

Research finds that Americans—whether they live in urban, suburban or rural areas—do not support practices that they view as pointless, unsporting or wasteful. A national poll taken by the respected, bipartisan firm Remington Research Group in January 2022 found that 80% of Americans oppose wildlife killing contests.⁷⁸ Motivation for hunting affects public support for it. The *American Attitudes Towards Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting, and Trapping 2019* report by the National Shooting Sports Foundation and Responsive Management found that while 84% of survey respondents supported hunting for meat, only 29% supported hunting for a trophy.⁷⁹ It is likely that support for killing contests is even less than it is for trophy hunting.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that 85% of Maine residents do not currently hold a paid hunting license.⁸⁰ Further, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis found that in 2023, hunting and trapping accounted for only 0.6% of the more than \$3 billion in outdoor recreation revenue that was generated in Maine.⁸¹

A keystone study, the *America's Wildlife Values* project, has documented a substantial shift in public attitudes away from a *traditionalist* view of wildlife—a belief of human mastery over wildlife and that wildlife should be managed for human benefit—and toward a *mutualist* view of wildlife, or the belief that humans and wildlife should coexist and that the welfare of animals is important.⁸² That study also found

⁷⁶ Kitty Block: A Humane World: "Undercover investigation exposes senseless rush to kill coyotes at New York wildlife killing contest," March 3, 2020 at <https://www.humaneworld.org/en/blog/undercover-investigation-exposes-senseless-rush-kill-coyotes-new-york-wildlife-killing-contest>

⁷⁷ Kitty Block: A Humane World: "UN recognizes children's right to be free from exposure to violence against animals," December 5, 2023 at <https://www.humaneworld.org/en/blog/un-recognizes-childrens-right-be-free-exposure-violence-against-animals>

⁷⁸ National Public Opinion, January 2022, Remington Research Group,

<https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/docs/National-Public-Opinion-011022-condensed.pdf>

⁷⁹ "American Attitudes Towards Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting, and Trapping," Responsive Management and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (2019), p. 14,

https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/7715/5733/7920/NSSF_2019_Attitudes_Survey_Report.pdf

⁸⁰ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Hunting Licenses, Holders, and Costs by Apportionment Year at <https://us-east-1-quickstart.amazonaws.com/sn/accounts/329180516311/dashboards/48b2aa9c-43a9-4ea6-887e-5465bd70140b>

⁸¹ U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "[SAOACTVA Outdoor recreation satellite account activities - value added](#) ¹" (accessed Sunday, March 30, 2025).

⁸² Manfredo, M.J., Sullivan, L., Don Carlos, A.A., Dietsch, A.M., Teel, T.L., Bright, A.D., & Bruskotter, J. 2018).

America's Wildlife Values: The Social Context of Wildlife Management in the U.S. National report from the research

that Maine has nearly 10% more mutualists than traditionalists, and that 68% of Mainers agreed with the statement that the state should strive for environmental protection over economic growth.⁸³ The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the Wildlife Management Institute have noted these studies and underscored the need for state wildlife management agencies to appeal to a broader constituency to ensure that wildlife agencies remain influential in the future.⁸⁴

Wildlife killing contest participants often try to rationalize the competitions by vilifying targeted species like coyotes, but current social science shows that most Americans do not share these views about this historically persecuted species. In fact, a study by researchers at the Ohio State University found that between 1978 and 2014, the public's positive attitudes toward coyotes grew by 47 percent, with the majority of respondents expressing positive attitudes toward coyotes.⁸⁵ The researchers theorized that this increase in positive attitudes toward coyotes may indicate that Americans are growing more concerned for their welfare. Other studies, including the *Nature of Americans Report*, have found that Americans express broad interest in nature, believe connecting with nature is important, and want to conserve wildlife species and their habitats.⁸⁶

9. Conclusion: We ask you to support LD 1293 to prohibit killing contests in Maine.

As outlined above, it is well-established that wildlife killing contests do not achieve any science-based wildlife management objective. In fact, they are counterproductive to sound science. Killing contests are held for the sole purpose of killing animals for entertainment and the chance at cash and prizes, and as such, are incompatible with Maine's values of sportsmanship, good stewardship, and respect for wildlife. Allowing a small group of individuals to engage in this senseless waste of life violates the state's duty to responsibly manage its wildlife in trust for all Mainers. The science and significant public outrage against wildlife killing contests, which only continues to grow, cannot be ignored.

Prohibiting wildlife killing contests will instill confidence in the Maine public that their legislature carefully considers the best available science and ethics when making decisions that impact wildlife, the environment, and our urban and rural communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Katie Hansberry
Maine State Director
khansberry@humaneworld.org

project entitled "America's Wildlife Values." Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/wp-content/uploads/sites/124/2019/01/AWV-National-Final-Report.pdf>

⁸³ Dietsch, A.M., Don Carlos, A.W., Manfredo, M. J., Teel, T. L., & Sullivan, L. (2018). State report for Maine from the research project entitled "America's Wildlife Values." Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/results/>.

⁸⁴ The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the Wildlife Management Institute: *The Fish and Wildlife Agency Relevance Roadmap (v1.0); Enhanced Conservation Through Broader Engagement*. September 2019 at https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/2515/7547/9977/Fish_Wildlife_Relevancy_Roadmap_Final_12-04-19-lowres.pdf

⁸⁵ George, Kelly A., Kristina M. Slagle, Robyn S. Wilson, Steven J. Moeller and Jeremy T. Bruskotter. 2016. Changes in attitudes toward animals in the United States from 1978 to 2014. *Biological Conservation* 201:237-242. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006320716302774>

⁸⁶ Kellert, S.R., Case, D.J., Escher, D., Witter, D.J., Mikels-Carrasco, J., Seng, P.T. April 2017. The Nature of Americans: National Report. https://natureofamericans.org/sites/default/files/reports/Nature-of-Americans_National_Report_1.3_4-26-17.pdf