

TESTIMONY OF ROBERT FISK, JR.  
Founder and Executive Director of Maine Friends of Animals

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

Good afternoon Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Roberts, and members of the committee. My name is Robert Fisk, Jr. and I am the founder and Executive Director of Maine Friends of Animals, located in Falmouth. I am also a former member of this body and it is always nice to be back.

I will start my testimony by quickly synopsisizing what this bill IS and what it IS NOT.

- This is NOT a bill intended to address the merits of coyote control. It is instead about one extreme outlier hunting activity.
- This IS about the degradation of Maine's wildlife and disrespect to Maine hunting traditions and ethics.
- This IS about essentially two major contests that have never had any meaningful effect on coyote populations. These contests cull less than 2% of the coyote population.
- This is NOT "anti-hunting" legislation. It is about one egregious hunting practice that there is a national trend to end.
- This IS about the damage these events have to the coyote's place in the ecological balance in the Maine's woods.
- This is NOT a public safety issue. The opposition loves to scare people with "if we don't do something."

Others after me will elaborate on each of these facts.

Since coyotes became more prevalent in the 1970s, we have trapped them, we have snared them, we changed and increased the hunting seasons on them, we used hounds on them, we allowed night hunting and increased that season, we have baited them, used bounties on them, used calling devices, but worst of all, we have used killing contests.

Coyote killing contests really were not prevalent until 2009, created by a couple of independent hunting groups who have brought with them the mentality that this malicious slaughter of a species is morally and ethically okay. Note that the MDIF&W has never officially endorsed these events.

It is our hope that the committee will see past this antiquated notion that there can be no changes in any hunting practice regardless of how cruel, useless or unethical it is. Any bill to deviate from that mindset is automatically deemed "anti-hunting." It is this practice that is anti-hunting. Not only is this mass indiscriminate killing an embarrassment to a state that prides itself on its hunting ethics and traditions, it is a public relations issue for a sport decreasing in its numbers.

Again, LD 1293 is about one specific hunting practice. Nothing more. Is it a minor hunting practice that has all the before-mentioned downsides that will not go away. My attachments confirm it is a practice that has no support except with the extreme hunting lobby. The vast majority of the public and many hunters are against killing contests. It is an outlier practice that has no place in serious wildlife management discussions, let alone modern civilized society.

As Sen. Beebe-Center noted, there is a national trend to end these bloodsport activities, and it is overdue for Maine to follow suit.


With that, I urge the committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1293. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

#### Attachments:

LD 1239 "An Act to Prohibit Coyote-killing Contests in Maine" FACT SHEET  
New England Depts. of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Statements On Coyote Killing  
List of Conservation and Wildlife Organizations in Support of the Prohibition of  
Killing Contests  
Polls on wildlife killing contests  
Portland Press Herald Op-Ed  
Bangor Daily News outdoor reporter John Holyoke column  
National Wildlife Conservation Organizations' Statements Regarding Killing  
Contests

# LD 1293 “An Act to Prohibit Coyote-Killing Contests in Maine”

## FACT SHEET

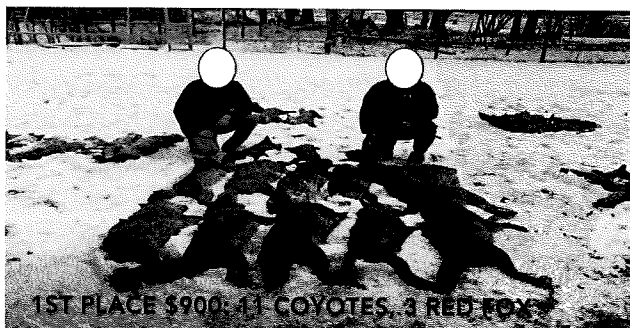
- **These killing events are a degradation of Maine's wildlife, and disrespectful of our hunting traditions and ethics.** These malicious killings do not align with Maine's hunting traditions of sportsmanship and fair chase principles, nor the ethics and reverence for nature in general. Wanton killing of wildlife for a prize undermines the public's view of hunting and gives all hunters a black eye. Rewarding the indiscriminate killing of as many animals as one can violates conservation ethics and its humane values. Glorifying killing for its own sake should not be what we want to teach our children.
- 
- **There is no credible science supporting the indiscriminate killing of wildlife as an effective method for wildlife management.** A strong body of science indicates that short-term hunts have no measurable impact on regulating coyote populations nor increasing deer populations. When reductions in coyote numbers are locally achieved, other coyotes simply move in to fill the area. Adults can increase their reproductive rates in response to increased hunting, as with killing contests, so populations rebound quickly. Habitat loss and severe winters are far more likely responsible for deer losses in the north country than coyote predation. These “derbies”, often held under the guise of “wildlife management”, but they have never had the official support of the Department of IF&W.
  - **This is not anti-hunting legislation.** Maine's wildlife belongs to all state residents. This bill is about one very egregious hunting practice that has no place in Maine's wildlife hunting or management. Those claiming this bill is about ending all hunting by animal rights groups is the same old false mantra claimed by the hunting lobby when it cannot defend its practices to the public and wants to change the focus. This endless “slippery slope” argument translates into everything is “anti-hunting” unless it is agreeable with those who hold onto the antiquated notion that we cannot change any hunting practice regardless of how cruel, useless or unethical it is? This bill addresses just one egregious “hunting” practice that is an outlier that does not represent traditional Maine hunters; and will continue to become a public relations problem for a sport that is already at low numbers.
  - **Mass removal of a wildlife species from the environment impairs the ecological benefits these animals provide to both urban and rural communities.** Predator and prey species are vital to a healthy ecosystem. With man's eradication of wolves, coyotes are essential to control rodent and small mammal populations, cull sick and injured animals and eat wildlife that harbor ticks / Lyme disease. Coyotes are ecologically vital top carnivores in Eastern US biodiversity. Coyote killing contests impact and impair these ecological stabilities and the balance of nature. These are intelligent and highly adaptable animals living in deserts and city alleyways, and hence we should accept that reality and educate our communities about humane ways for co-existence, and fostering greater understanding of this animal and valuable species.

(OVER)

- **Opposition to wildlife killing contests is growing rapidly.** Polls show the vast majority of the public, including hunters, are against killing contests. This bill has been endorsed many state and national conservation and wildlife organizations. Ten states have banned wildlife killings contests: Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Mexico, Vermont, Washington, Oregon and New York. Five more states, including Maine, are submitting anti-killing contests legislation, and Congress has introduced the 'Prohibit Wildlife Killing Contests Act'. With this national trend to end these blood sport activities, it is time for Maine to follow suit.
- **Coyotes are not a public safety issue.** Healthy coyote families are typically wary of humans, and attacks are extremely rare. Coyotes in your yard can be easily dispersed with a yell, thrown stick or banging on a pot or pan. Irresponsible human behavior is most often the root cause of wildlife conflicts. There are many simple ways we can eliminate or reduce coyote interactions such as walking dogs with a leash, not leaving out pet food, securing garbage cans, keeping cats indoors (also protecting birds), eliminating artificial water sources, clearing brush, using motion lighting, and walking trails with a whistle. Healthy coyotes are not motivated to go after livestock, but issues can be mitigated with good husbandry practices and predator deterrent light sensors. Many farmers appreciate coyotes keeping rodents levels in check, and foxes, skunks and raccoons away from stock, and deer herds moving so they do less damage to plants and products.

***Do these images reflect Maine's hunting traditions and conservation ethics?***

## COYOTE KILLING CONTESTS



## **NEW ENGLAND DEPTS. OF INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE STATEMENTS REGARDING COYOTE KILLING**

### **Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife:**

- "Coyote numbers are controlled by social interactions and competition for food. They are territorial and aggressively defend their territories against other coyotes. Therefore, only a limited number of coyotes can live in a given area."
- "They're an important predator. All predators have ecological value, just like all prey have important ecological value."
- "It is neither necessary nor possible to eliminate the entire population of coyotes in a given area."
- "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 furlous neighbors."
- "Coyotes also benefit farmers and other property owners by helping control populations of mice, rats, voles, moles, and woodchucks."
- "To date, there have been no documented coyote attacks on humans in Maine."

### **Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife):**

- "...hunting [would not] have an appreciable impact on coyote population size under any realistic scenarios."
- "...address public concerns that these hunting contests are unethical ... and incentivize indiscriminate killing of wildlife..."
- "...recognizing that public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting and undermine public support for hunting in general, MassWildlife recommended the following regulatory changes: prohibit hunting contests for predators and furbearers; prohibit "wanton waste" of game animals taken during regulated hunting and trapping seasons."
- "These regulations do not reduce opportunity for hunting coyotes or other furbearers; fulfill one of MassWildlife's core functions to develop and maintain hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities in Massachusetts; address public concern that certain contests contribute to the waste of animals; recognize and address that public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting; discourage the waste of wildlife and reinforces a core principle and expectation that all animals taken during the regulated seasons are utilized to the greatest extent possible, as taught in Hunter Education; recognize that coyotes and other furbearers are managed as a valuable natural resource."
- Head of Information & Education Marlon Larson: "The contest is being offered by a private business, it has nothing to do with managing wildlife...I do want to make it clear coyote contests are not a management tool by any stretch of the imagination...There is a misconception that coyote kill contests are a method of managing local populations."

### **New Hampshire Fish & Wildlife:**

- "Coyotes are elusive, adaptive, intelligent animals that manage to hold their own when living in close contact with humans."
- "Most coyote management attempts have been designed to reduce their population numbers, however, due to their fecundity, behavior and adaptability, those attempts have failed."
- "[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."

### **Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management, Division of Fish & Wildlife:**

- "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."
- "Although lethal removal can be effective in the short term to remove individuals, this significant reproductive capacity means that lethal control can cause the coyote

population to grow over time."

- "Coyotes are generalists and eat a wide variety of food items. They will prey on many animals including rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks, deer, mice, voles, birds, snakes, and insects. A large component of their diet consists of carrion: carcasses of animals that may have died naturally or of other causes, such as auto strikes. Fruit and other plant materials are an important element of their diet as well. Coyotes will readily eat wild and cultivated apples, grapes, blueberries, strawberries, and even cultivated corn when it is available."

#### **Vermont Fish & Wildlife:**

- "Coyote 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."
- "Although these activities follow laws and regulations, 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."
- "Expensive extermination and bounty programs were common in the past and were responsible, along with habitat loss, for the elimination of some natural predators throughout the United States. These techniques have no place in modern wildlife management, which stresses the importance of all species."
- "Attempts to eradicate or control coyote numbers in western states have been extremely costly and have met with failure."
- "Both predators and prey species are vital components in a healthy ecosystem. Deer and other prey species evolved with predators and as such, we neither regard predators as undesirable, nor do we view them as a significant threat to game populations. In fact, predators can help to maintain prey populations at levels that are in balance with their habitat."

## **WILDLIFE KILLING CONTEST POLLING RESULTS**

**\*Wildlife killing contests have now been banned in Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, New Mexico, California, Vermont, Massachusetts, Maryland and New York.**

❖ **National Public Opinion Poll** (Jan 2022 conducted by Remington Research Group)

Do you support or oppose wildlife killing contests?

Support: 14%

Oppose: 80%

Not sure: 6%

❖ **New Mexico** (December 2016 conducted by Third Eye Strategies)

New Mexico voters oppose coyote killing contests by more than a two-to-one margin.

❖ **Oregon** (Jan 2019 conducted by Remington Research Group)

Do you support or oppose a ban in Oregon on wildlife killing contests?

Support: 60%

Oppose: 31%

Not sure: 9%

❖ **United States Resident Survey on Animal Protection Issues & Policy Solutions** (Oct 2024 conducted by Colorado State University & Project Coyote)

85.8% support a federal law specifying cruelty towards wildlife is a criminal violation;

77.5% support a federal law requiring states to limit the number of carnivores that can be killed by a hunter in a year;

78.2% support a federal law banning wildlife killing contests

81.7% support state laws banning wildlife killing contests & restricting hunting seasons for carnivores

❖ **Illinois General Election Poll** (April 2022 conducted by Remington Research Group)

Do you support or oppose a ban on wildlife killing contests in Illinois?

Support: 73%

Oppose: 19%

Not sure: 9%

❖ **Nevada Public Opinion Poll** (Sept 2024 conducted by Remington Research Group)

Do you support or oppose the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners banning wildlife killing contests in Nevada?

Support: 71%

Oppose: 19%  
Not sure: 10%

❖ **U.S. Department of Agriculture Data**

All carnivores combined—including coyotes, wolves, and cougars—are responsible for less than 0.5 percent of cattle & sheep losses in the U.S.

❖ **Council to Advance Hunting & the Shooting Sports** (June 2024)

84% of respondents approve of hunting for meat  
29% of respondents approve of trophy hunting

❖ **National Shooting Sports Foundation** (2019)

85% of Americans are OK with hunting to protect humans  
29% approve of hunting for a trophy

❖ In 2022, 77% of **Virginia** voters supported a proposed rule to “outlaw killing contests.” The bill was tabled in the House's National Resources subcommittee with a 3 to 3 tie vote.

# Wildlife and Conservation Organizations in Support of the Prohibition of Coyote Killing Contests



CENTER *for* BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



**PROJECT  
COYOTE**



**Eastern Coyote/Coywolf Research**

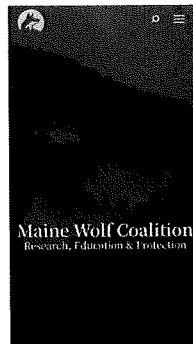
Research for protecting agriculture and wildlife communities from coyotes and coywolf hybridization, and restoring native wolf and coyote populations.



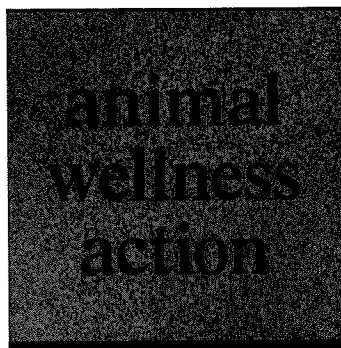
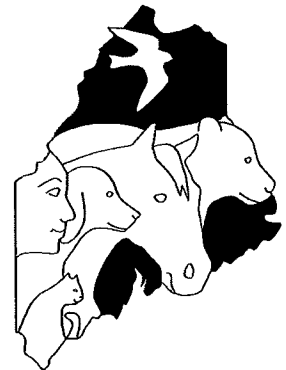
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DEFENSE FUND** EST  
1979



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**



**Maine Wolf Coalition**  
Research, Education & Protection



**RESTORE:**  
**The North Woods**

TO: The Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

RE: In support of "An Act to Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests"

BANGOR DAILY NEWS

*Coyote hunting derby may not prove to be a very wily move*

By **John Holyoke**

Outdoor Reporter, Sports Column

January 13, 2005

A group of Down East Sportsman recently came up with a novel way of dealing with a coyote population they feel has gotten out of control. They're staging a coyote hunting derby and giving prizes to the most successful hunters. The derby begins at noon Friday and runs through a half hour after sunset on Saturday. Registration will be held at the Pleasant River Fish and Game Club in Columbia and the Princeton Rod and Gun Club. Kill the most coyotes by using a call and get a prize. Kill the most coyotes by stalking and win a prize. It's pretty simple.

Just as simple is the uproar that has been caused by the Washington County Fish and Wildlife Conservation Club's derby. In November, Maine sportsman received a hard earned early Christmas gift when they help defeat a referendum that would have ended bear hunting as we know it in the state. Now, barely two months later, a group of sportsmen have essentially given the Humane Society of United States and other rights groups their own gift: a chance to take the ethical high ground.

The HSUS fired off a letter to Governor Baldacci's office last week protesting the coyote derby. HSUS officials called the derby "in a front to civilized people." Hunters and outdoor enthusiast who tend to bristle whenever the initials H-S-U-S are mentioned will likely dismiss that charge on general principal. That's their right. But they shouldn't ignore the fact that many non-HSUS members — and more than a few hunters — likely think a coyote derby will leave a lasting negative impression.

What if a group of anglers decided they'd hold a fish in Derby, where the fisherman who killed the most brook trout got a cash prize? And what if all those trout weren't going to be eaten, but we're only being killed to be theoretically to protect a species we outdoors folks view as intrinsically more valuable? That wouldn't happen of course. Fish derbies don't work that way, and most anglers would call the practice wasteful. But we have learned over the past few years coyotes get a bad rep in the state. The reason: they eat deer among other things. And deer — like brook trout — are coveted by Maine sportsmen. Coyotes aren't. They're despised and blamed for variety of ills. To use a fishing analogy, coyotes are largely viewed as a "trash" species.

To its credit, the Washington County Fish and Wildlife Conservation Club will spend the proceeds from the event to fund youth conservation education, and improve deer habitat. Unfortunately, where the money is going is not going to matter and nearly as much as nearly as many as the derby itself will. Wildlife managers say that in Washington County, controlling the coyote population is important priority. The state-run coyote snaring program has been halted, and well meaning sportsmen have come up with their own solution. The problem: sending a group of sportsman into the woods to kill as many coyotes — or any other species, for that matter — as they can is bound to be criticized. Making an organized, concerted effort to reduce the coyote herd is one thing, and is something many would support. Doing the same thing for prices and killing as many critters as you can find? While the results may be the same, it sounds much different.

The governors office certainly seem to hear the difference. The official response to the HSUS: “We have checked with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and they advised us that such a coyote Derby is not illegal, provided that all participants have valid Maine hunting licenses. No special license is required. The governor does not condone this contest, but it appears that nothing in Maine law prohibits it.” That clearly isn’t a vote of confidence from governor Baldacci.

The mere existence of a coyote derby gives animal right groups the perfect chance to portray hunters as thrill seeking yahoos who don’t care what they shoot at, as long as they get to shoot at something or several “somethings”. That’s not the way hunters act, we continually inform those who don’t share our passion for the sport. Try telling that to the HSUS — or more importantly, to an unaffiliated non-hunter after — they hear about how many coyotes the derby “winners” pick off this weekend. Will the derby help reduce Down East coyote population? It likely will. Will that reduction help the deer herd? Perhaps. But will the derby be remembered most as a public relationship is nightmare for well-meaning hunters across the state? Unfortunately, I think it might.

## **NATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS' STATEMENTS REGARDING KILLING CONTESTS**

**The Boone & Crockett Club** *Established in 1887, Boone & Crockett's mission is to promote the conservation and management of wildlife, especially big game, and its habitat, to preserve and encourage hunting and to maintain the highest ethical standards of fair chase and sportsmanship in North America.*

- Fair chase is described as "the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit and taking of any free-ranging wild, native North American big game animal in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper advantage over such animals."
- Boone & Crockett also places strong emphasis on treating hunted animals with respect, minimizing pain and suffering of an animal by killing it as quickly as possible, and not wasting it.

**The Izaak Walton League of America** *For over 100 years, the Izaak Walton League of America has promoted community-based conservation and volunteer science while advocating for strong state and national policies to protect our air, water and wildlife.*

- 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.

**National Wildlife Federation** *America's largest and most trusted conservation organization, fighting since 1936 for the conservation values that are woven into the fabric of our nation's collective heritage.*

- Proponents say predator killing contests are needed to manage wildlife that interfere with livestock or beneficial native species. Critics say it's an unnecessarily brutal practice that can end up producing even more predatory behavior. In the middle are the experts responsible for managing wildlife populations and human expectations.

**The Wildlife Society** *An international non-profit involved in wildlife stewardship since 1937, The Wildlife Society works to improve wildlife conservation in North America by advancing the science of wildlife management, promoting continuing education of wildlife professionals, and advocating for sound, science-based wildlife policy.*

- Discourages contests that adversely affect the wildlife resource or the public appreciation of wildlife resources.
- Supports that wildlife killed must be put to legitimate uses.
- Opposes all contests that intentionally wound animals in a manner that causes excess pain and suffering, kill parents resulting in orphaned, dependent young, or devalue wildlife by showing disrespectful photos of piles of dead animals.
- Recognizes there is little evidence to support the use of killing contests for controlling predator populations.
- Recognizes 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.

**Wildlife for All** *Wildlife for All was created in 2021 as an offshoot of the 30yr old Southwest Environmental Center and is a national movement to reform state wildlife management to be more ecologically-driven, democratic, and compassionate, focusing on protecting wild species and ecosystems.*

- Despite their claims of “management,” wildlife killing contests exist for one reason: the thrill of the kill. These events turn wildlife into moving targets, rewarding people for slaughtering as many animals as possible. Wildlife killing contests are not about conservation. They are about cruelty. They are about turning the systematic extermination of a species into a game.
- The claim that coyotes are a “threat” to wildlife is not only false, it’s completely nonsensical. How can a species that evolved as part of an ecosystem be a danger to that very system? Coyotes play a crucial role keeping rodent populations in check, preventing disease outbreaks, and maintaining the food web. Removing them disrupts these natural processes, leading to unintended consequences and ecosystem instability.
- The idea that wildlife needs to be “managed” by humans, particularly through indiscriminate killing, is rooted in a flawed and outdated worldview. Nature has successfully regulated itself for millennia without human intervention. It is only when we interfere—by exterminating predators, fragmenting habitats, and altering food sources—that ecosystems begin to unravel.
- **The research is clear: lethal control does not reduce coyote populations long-term.** Instead, it disrupts their social structure and triggers an increase in reproduction and migration, often leading to *more* coyotes in the area.

**International Hunter Education Association** *IHEA-USA is the professional education association affiliated with every US-based hunter education program. Its mission is to continue the heritage of hunting worldwide by developing safe, responsible, knowledgeable and involved hunters.*

- We don’t like anything that smacks of commercialization with money or prizes. Anything that doesn’t honor the animals grates on us and seems inherently wrong. These contests create very poor PR for hunters.

**Orion - The Hunter’s Institute** *Since 1993, Orion has been protecting the future of hunting by providing leadership on ethical and philosophical issues and to promote fair chase and responsible hunting.*

- Orion has been “dedicated to improving the image of hunting with an emphasis on fair chase ethics,” founder Jim Posewitz said. “I don’t think any form of hunting should be competitive. I think we need to encourage a more sensitive relationship with the animals we hunt.”
- “Those of us who value hunting don’t need PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and the Humane Society to give hunting a black eye,” Posewitz told *Mountain Journal*. “We’re doing that all by ourselves, against ourselves, with the proliferation of self-promoting videos on Youtube and selfies of people posing with dead animals on Facebook and other forms of social media. We’ve become our own worst enemy.” - Jim Posewitz, Orion founder and member of the Montana Outdoor Hall of Fame

<https://www.pressherald.com/2025/02/24/opinion-coyote-killing-contests-have-no-place-in-maine>

## Opinion: Coyote killing contests have no place in Maine

This indiscriminate slaughter is an embarrassment to a state that prides itself on its hunting ethics and traditions.

Posted February 24

**Robert Fisk Jr.**

Special to the Press Herald

One of Maine Friends of Animals' first pieces of legislation in 1999 was an intense two-year campaign to end the gruesome activity of coyote snaring. Every year since then, hunting and trapping groups and legislators have continued to sponsor countless bills on various forms of coyote killing, while time after time there has been no scientific evidence that showed any of these ideas or practices had any meaningful effect on deer populations or coyote numbers.

In 2005 then-Gov. John Baldacci and many legislators came out against the most egregious of these practices: coyote killing contests. Sportsmen's groups did nothing, and in fact increased the number of contests. Moreover, since 1972, when coyotes were first trapped in Maine, we have seen nearly a hundred bills to kill coyotes come before the Legislature.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Robert Fisk Jr.** is founder and executive director of Maine Friends of Animals. He is also a former state legislator from Falmouth.

Besides the flurry of legislative activity, there have been countless studies, plans, working groups, legislative reviews, species assessments and programs all prioritized on coyote control. Nothing has been left to chance.

We have trapped coyotes, we have snared them, changed and increased the hunting seasons on them, we used hounds on them, we allowed night hunting and increased that season, we have baited them,

used bounties on them, used calling devices and, worst of all, we have used killing contests.

In Maine now it is open season on coyotes. The grand result? We have more coyotes today than ever. Despite every piece of legislation imaginable and countless studies, programs and methods, 50-plus years later we continue to hear the same hollow arguments and largely anecdotal evidence of temporary improvement in wintering habitat or “it’s better than doing nothing.”

Is this our basis for wildlife management? Not to mention the wasted time by the Legislature and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. It is time to rethink this endless, ineffective, inhumane cycle and focus instead on living with this important component of nature’s ecosystem.

Coyote killing is often organized by private hunting groups, as are the killing contests. These derbies or tournaments are events that reward people with cash prizes, weapons or other incentives for killing coyotes such as the biggest, the most or the most by different methods, during an established time period.

These events only serve to perpetuate a culture of violence and send a message that wild animals have little intrinsic value and are disposable. They are promoted as “wildlife management” programs, conducted for profit, entertainment and the “fun” of killing. They are often sponsored by hunting outfitters and hosted in places like restaurants and bars.

Private hunting groups have evolved to fulfill coyote killing, including sponsoring and funding these contests, and they operate without the official support of state government.

This is yet another test for Maine hunters, their lobbyists and legislative allies, as to whether they will continue with the antiquated notion that there can be no changes in any hunting practice regardless of how cruel, useless or unethical it is.

Any bill to deviate from that mindset is automatically deemed “anti-hunting.”

Will this extreme hunting lobby continue to try to defend the defenseless? Not only is this mass indiscriminate slaughter an embarrassment to a state that prides itself on its hunting ethics and traditions, but it is also a public relations problem for a sport that is already at all-time low numbers.

Now there is pending national legislation and 10 other states, including Vermont and New York, ban some form of killing contests. Five other states, including Maine, are considering it. A common refrain in past state testimonies has been, “It is a black eye for hunting.”

There is a national trend to end these blood sport activities and it is past time for Maine to follow suit. Please contact your state legislators and ask them to support “An Act to Prohibit Coyote Killing Contests,” which have no place in modern civilized society.

