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LD 814

Sen. David LaFountain, Chair, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee
Rep. Scott Landry, Chair, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee the Committee

Members of the IFW Committee:

I'm writing to express strong support for LD 814. Coyotes, like any other animal, need to be seen in the context of other wildlife and the ecology in general. Responses to perceived conflicts should be the result of applied science as well as a knowledge of the relationship that all wildlife have to each other and the environment instead of criminalizing an entire species and declaring non-stop war using methods that are cruel and abhorrent.

This bill would help limit the gruesome 'sport' of packs of hunting dogs chasing a coyote until it's exhausted and then torn apart while still alive in a barbaric scenario that's almost beyond imagination. This is as close to dog fighting – a felony in most of the U.S. – as possible, and yet it's still allowed here. It's a vicious, inhumane practice that is not worthy of Maine's reputation for sportsmanship and fair play.

LD 814 would also reduce the practice of killing coyotes at night and using bait to lure them out of their dens and shooting them. That's ambushing, not hunting. Perhaps most egregious of all is that the endless war on coyotes terrorizes property owners as well as their pets and domestic livestock. The nightmarish practice of sending packs of six radio-collared hounds trained to attack and kill coyotes has angered and threatened many landowners. The result is that humans and their animals are under threat on their own land, harassed by dogs trained by other humans to kill without respect to the fearful effect on others.

Whether we like it not, coyote has a place that we share with all life on the planet. It's up to us as the so-called "superior species" to use research and science to devise methods to co-exist. Fighting an endless year-round war, subjecting these creatures to all kinds of cruelty and pain and needless suffering is brutality that no one -animal or human- should have to endure. It also doesn't solve the problem. Here, for instance, is what the US. Fish and Wildlife Service had to say in 2014:

"Unseen effects occur when coyotes are killed. Left alone, coyotes will control their own numbers. When a pack is established and stable, only the dominant (parent) male and female will reproduce. Extended family members only support them. If the dominant female is killed, other females in the pack will respond by breeding more coyotes, and the population increases instead of decreases! Thus, it is possible to kill one animal and end up with several more than you started with. Killing parent coyotes leads to a breakdown of the social structure of packs, causing the average group size to decline, the age of individuals and reproduction to rise, and more pups to survive."

USFWS also added the following comment:

"Of greatest importance, though, lethal control has been proven ecologically damaging. Top predators like coyotes play a critical role in keeping natural areas healthy. In fact, coyotes are a keystone species, meaning that their presence or absence has a significant impact on the surrounding biological community. Remove this keystone species, and other populations may go out of kilter, for example, an increase in rodent populations, which has its own negative effect."

It's about time we consider more effective, science-based approaches to coyotes. LD 814 is an important step in that direction.

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