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LD 716

I wish to register my opposition to LD 716 which would restrict the coyote hunting season. This whole issue was hotly debated last session and was rightfully defeated. This is essentially a repackaged version submitted by a different sponsor.

The current season structure is fully intended to be a predator control season and NOT a fur harvest season. As currently structured it is intended to help control coyote populations and reduce coyote predation on the deer herd, particularly in central and northern Maine. As such the rules and restrictions on coyote harvest are much more liberal than if it was for a fur harvest season.

Many of the same people supporting more restrictions on coyote hunting are the same ones actually responsible for coyotes becoming a nuisance and not a valued fur resource, through their opposition to the fur trade and use of fur which has resulted in a depressed fur market where coyote skins are nearly worthless, leading to drastically reduced trapper harvests.

As you have already heard last session and will, or will likely, hear during public testimony this go round, the former Deer Biologist for MDIFW, Gerald Lavigne is probably the foremost authority on the relationship between coyotes and deer in Maine. Actual in-the-woods field experience. I have known Gerry since the late 1970's when coyotes were first becoming established in Maine. At that time he believed that coyotes did not present a serious issue to deer. His subsequent work with both deer and coyotes, made him realize just how serious a threat coyotes were when it came to restoring and protecting a deer population. To the point that he is now one of the most vocal proponents of the current season structure, with sound scientific data to back up his position. I would suggest that the IF&W Committee listen to what he says and defeat this repetitive attempt to unnecessarily protect coyotes.

Again, there is no shortage of coyotes, and no need for restricting the season. Current control efforts ARE resulting in reduced coyote predation and noticeable increases in the deer herd in key areas. But it needs to be an ongoing effort.

Remember that current season structure is primarily a nuisance control season and not a fur harvest season. Rules, as such, are different. From a different perspective, if it were a rat infestation, the rats would be controlled intensively by multiple means, all year long, and not restricted to any season. While I don't consider coyotes in the same category as rats, the logic under current conditions should be the same regarding any rules for their current control.

Please use facts and logic to guide your decision on this bill and not emotion. This bill should be voted "Ought Not To Pass"