

Testimony in SUPPORT  
of LD 1293, "An Act to Prohibit Coyote-killing Contests in Maine"

Before the Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife  
Presented by Jayne Winters, South China, ME

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Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, distinguished members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, my name is Jayne Winters. I was born in Maine and have lived here all my life, currently residing in South China. I am in favor of LD 1293, "An Act to Prohibit Coyote-killing Contests in Maine" in the hope that you will ban these events and direct the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife to do further research on non-lethal population control options for wild canids.

I assume you know that 50+ years of Maine "coyote management" has included trapping, hunting, snaring, special night hunting, utilizing bounty incentives, and extending seasons. Year 'round. Every day except Sundays. Yet it seems every year there's another coyote bill brought before the Legislature, whether to reduce the season or somehow expand it. What's to be done?

The idea that coyotes are committing some kind of evil offense by killing and eating deer is ridiculous. They are predators, simply acting instinctively to feed themselves and their families in the only way they know how. Although an occasional wolf and mountain lion are sighted, thanks to their extirpation by humans, Maine's primary apex predators are black bear, coyote, lynx, bobcat and fox. Like it or not, they play a vital role in maintaining biodiversity and contribute to healthy ecosystems.

Wildlife killing contests trivialize the life of animals by presenting them as little more than a commodity to be exploited for prizes, such as cash, hunting equipment and even AR-15 assault rifles. In the way caring for a family pet can teach children responsibility, compassion and respect, promoting and celebrating the mass killing of animals - predators or prey - can impact the development of empathy and an appreciation for all life, as well as encourage cruelty and violence.

I would like to respectfully suggest we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in our approach to coyote management. Much has changed in wildlife populations. Along with the loss of predator species, we have significant and continuing destruction of habitat, and now the effects of climate change. We can't expect to develop successful wildlife management plans if we're still operating under methods decades old. Instead of lethal "management" that has proven ineffective time and time again, we need policies that promote respect, coexistence, and sound ecological principles.

No single method for wildlife management is effective as there are too many variables for a "one size fits all" solution, but isn't it worth our time, effort and money to investigate options as they become available? That being said, is fertility control a potential management tool for coyotes? Current research suggests it has possibilities and the potential for at least reducing litter size.

After learning about the success of PZP (Porcine zona pellucida), a totally natural vaccine administered by remote darting that blocks fertilization in wild horses, I searched for "wild canid fertility control" on the internet and discovered a great deal of research has been done and continues to move forward. There are many sites of interest, such as the Botstiber Institute for Wildlife Fertility Control in PA, which "advances reproductive management as part of an integrated approach to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts and promotes coexistence worldwide through education, outreach and engagement." Grants are available to help provide education for wildlife managers, policy makers and the public about wildlife fertility control.

We need to look to the future and alternative options for managing our wildlife, not just implement more killing. We should be willing to shut down hunts and other practices that are socially unacceptable, unsustainable and ecologically backwards. Banning coyote killing contests is a good first step in moving beyond old school methods that clearly aren't working.

Thank you for your consideration.

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