



**Bill:** HB 293 to prohibit wildlife killing contests  
**Position:** Support  
**Date:** January 15, 2021

Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jill Fritz, I am a Maryland resident and a senior director of Wildlife Protection at the Humane Society of the United States. We support House Bill 293 to end wildlife killing contests, in which participants compete over a specified time period for cash and prizes for killing the most, the heaviest, or even the smallest animals. High-powered weapons are often used that inflict grisly injuries on the animals, who are often discarded after the prizes are awarded.

In January and February 2020, undercover investigators from the Humane Society of the United States recorded the aftermath of two wildlife killing contests in Unionville and Waldorf, Maryland, in which participants competed to kill foxes, coyotes and raccoons for cash and prizes. Details about that investigation can be found on page 6 of this statement.

We ask for your support of HB 293 for the following reasons:

### **1. Wildlife killing contests undermine modern, science-based wildlife management principles and are not an effective wildlife management tool.**

The indiscriminate killing promoted by wildlife killing contests is counterproductive to effective wildlife management. Scientific studies have shown that many wildlife populations depleted by unnatural means simply reproduce more quickly due to the sudden drop in competition for resources and changes to social structure from the loss of individuals.<sup>1</sup>

This effect is well documented for coyote populations in particular.<sup>2</sup> The indiscriminate killing of coyotes increases their populations over time because it disrupts their social structure, which encourages higher levels of breeding and migration. This negatively impacts the environment because coyotes are an integral part of healthy ecosystems.<sup>3</sup> Coyotes help to control disease transmission by keeping rodent populations in check, consume carrion, remove sick animals from the gene pool, disperse seeds, protect ground-nesting birds from smaller carnivores, and increase the biological diversity of plant and wildlife communities.<sup>4</sup>

State wildlife management agencies across the country have recognized that killing contests do not control coyote population size. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission concluded, after reviewing a large body of scientific and peer-reviewed literature, that indiscriminate, lethal methods of controlling coyotes, such as bounties and harvest incentive programs, are ineffective and counterproductive, that coyotes provide benefits to humans and ecosystems, and that non-lethal

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<sup>1</sup> F. F. Knowlton, et al., *Coyote Depredation Control: An Interface between Biology and Management*, 52 *Journal of Range Management* 398, 400-402 (1999). Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/43f7/3adf647447dd472db69c0b4712f1c71fab33.pdf>; Robert Crabtree and Jennifer Sheldon, *Coyotes and Canid Coexistence in Yellowstone*, in *Carnivores in Ecosystems: The Yellowstone Experience* (T. Clark et al., eds, 1999); J. M. Goodrich and S. W. Buskirk, *Control of Abundant Native Vertebrates for Conservation of Endangered Species*, 9 *Conservation Biology* (1995); Elizabeth Kierepka, et al., *Effect of Compensatory Immigration on the Genetic Structure of Coyotes*, 81 *J. Wildlife Mgmt* 1394, 1394 (2017). Available at: [https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/ja/2018/ja\\_2018\\_kilgo\\_002.pdf](https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/ja/2018/ja_2018_kilgo_002.pdf).  
<sup>2</sup> *Id.*; see also S.D. Gehrt, *Chicago Coyotes part II*, 11 *Wildlife Control Technologies* 20-21, 38-9, 42 (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Fox, C.H. and C.M. Papouchis, *Coyotes in Our Midst: Coexisting with an Adaptable and Resilient Carnivore* 9 (2005). Available at: [http://www.projectcoyote.com/Coyotes\\_In\\_Our\\_Midst.pdf](http://www.projectcoyote.com/Coyotes_In_Our_Midst.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> S. E. Henke and F. C. Bryant, *Effects of Coyote Removal on the Faunal Community in Western Texas*, 63 *Journal of Wildlife Management* 1066 (1999); K. R. Crooks and M. E. Soule, *Mesopredator Release and Avifaunal Extinctions in a Fragmented System*, 400 *Nature* 563 (1999); E. T. Mezquida, et al., *Sage-Grouse and Indirect Interactions: Potential Implications of Coyote Control on Sage-Grouse Populations*, 108 *Condor* 747 (2006). Available at: [http://repository.uwyo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=zoology\\_facpub](http://repository.uwyo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=zoology_facpub); N. M. Waser et al., *Coyotes, Deer, and Wildflowers: Diverse Evidence Points to a Trophic Cascade*, 101 *Naturwissenschaften* 427 (2014).

measures are the best way to address conflicts with coyotes.<sup>5</sup> The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife stated: “...hunting [would not] have an appreciable impact on coyote population size under any realistic scenarios.”<sup>6</sup> The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department made a similar finding, stating: “...we do not believe such short-term hunts will have any measurable impact on regulating coyote populations[.]”<sup>7</sup> The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation also stated: “...random removal of coyotes resulting from a year-round hunting season will not...control or reduce coyote populations.”<sup>8</sup> The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission found: “[r]emoving coyotes for the purpose of eradication is an inefficient and ineffective method to control populations...hunting and trapping place pressure on coyote populations, and the species responds by reproducing at a younger age and producing more pups per litter.”<sup>9</sup> Many other state wildlife management agencies, including those in Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, and Wyoming, have reached similar conclusions.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Wildlife killing contests do not increase populations of game animals.

The best available science indicates that indiscriminately killing carnivores is not an effective method for increasing game species abundance. Rather, the most important management tool to increase game species is to decrease harvest of female ungulates,<sup>10</sup> followed by protection of habitat.<sup>11</sup> Considering that science, many state commissions and agencies including those in Illinois, Louisiana, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming, have concluded that reducing carnivore numbers will not enhance populations of ungulates, small game animals, and game birds.<sup>12</sup> For example, the Pennsylvania Game Commission found: “[T]he agency finally accepted the

<sup>5</sup> North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Coyote Management Plan 11, 21-28 (2018). Available at: [www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Species/Coyote%20Management%20Plan\\_FINAL\\_030118.pdf](http://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Learning/documents/Species/Coyote%20Management%20Plan_FINAL_030118.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Public Hearing Notice on Draft Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Regulations at 321 CMR 2.00 and 3.02. (Sept. 20, 2019). Available at [https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/09/20/DFW\\_DRAFT\\_321%20CMR%202.26%2C2.17%2C3.02%20-%20PHN%2C%20Summary%2C%20and%20Proposed%20Regulations.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/09/20/DFW_DRAFT_321%20CMR%202.26%2C2.17%2C3.02%20-%20PHN%2C%20Summary%2C%20and%20Proposed%20Regulations.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, The Status and Impact of Eastern Coyotes in Northern New York (1991). Available at: [http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife\\_pdf/coystatnny91.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/coystatnny91.pdf).

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

<sup>9</sup> Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, Coyote. Available at: <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/wildlife/Pages/Coyote.aspx>; Kentucky Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources, Coyotes in the Suburbs. Available at:

<https://fw.ky.gov/Wildlife/Documents/KASpring17coyotes.pdf>; Travis Dufour, *Living with Coyotes*, Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Wildlife Division - Private Lands Program. Available at:

[http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/publication/34726-living-coyotes-low-res/living\\_with\\_coyotes\\_low-res.pdf](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/publication/34726-living-coyotes-low-res/living_with_coyotes_low-res.pdf); Bill White, *The Bounty Hunter*, Missouri Dept. of Conservation (Aug. 21, 2012). Available at: <https://mdc.mo.gov/blogs/more-quail/bounty-hunter>; New Hampshire Fish and Game, Eastern Coyote. Available at:

<https://wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife/profiles/coyote.html>; Nevada Dept. of Wildlife, Coyote. Available at:

<http://www.ndow.org/Species/Furbearer/Coyote/>; National Wildlife Control Training Program, Coyotes. Available at:

<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/publications/nuisance/coyotes.pdf>; Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Controlling Coyotes in Tennessee (Jan. 2003). Available at: <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/twra/documents/coyotecontrol.pdf>; Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Living with Wildlife. Available at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/coyotes.html>; West Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources, Eastern Coyote Impacts Of The Eastern Coyote On Wildlife Populations. Available at:

<http://www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/CoyoteResearch.shtml>; Dave Rippe, *Predator Control and Wildlife*, Wyoming Game and Fish Dept., Habitat Extension Bulletin: No. 57 (July 1995). Available at:

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Habitat/Extension%20Bulletins/B57-Predator-Control-and-Wildlife.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> C.A. DeYoung, *Population dynamics, in Biology and Management of Whitetailed Deer 147* (D. G. Hewitt, ed. 2011); J.C. Kilgo, et al, *Coyote removal, understory cover, and survival of white-tailed deer neonates*, 78 J. Wildlife Mgmt. 1261 (2014); North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Evaluation of Deer Hunting Seasons and Structures and Deer Management Units in North Carolina (2015). Available at: <http://www.ncwildlife.org/Portals/0/Regs/Documents/Evaluation-of-Deer-Hunting-Seasons-and-Mgt-Units.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> C.J. Bishop, et al., *Effect of Enhanced Nutrition on Mule Deer Population Rate of Change*, 172 Wildlife Monographs 1 (2009).

Available at: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=27710&inline=true>; Hurley, M. A., et al., *Demographic Response of Mule Deer to Experimental Reduction of Coyotes and Mountain Lions in Southeastern Idaho*, 178 Wildlife Monographs 1 (2011); T.D. Forrester and H. U. Wittmer, *A review of the population dynamics of mule deer and black-tailed deer Odocoileus hemionus in North America*, 43 Mammal Review 292 (2013); K.L. Monteith, et al., *Life-history characteristics of mule deer: Effects of nutrition in a variable environment*, 186 Wildlife Monographs 1 (2014).

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources, Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations: 2018-2019. Available at: <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/documents/huntrapdigest.pdf>; Travis Dufour, Living with Coyotes, Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries Wildlife. Available at: [http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/publication/34726-living-coyotes-low-res/living\\_with\\_coyotes\\_low-res.pdf](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/publication/34726-living-coyotes-low-res/living_with_coyotes_low-res.pdf); Missouri Dept. of Conservation, Coyote. Available at:

reality that predator control does not work. ...To pretend that predator control can return small game hunting to the state is a false prophecy...[Predators] don't compete with our hunters for game."<sup>13</sup> The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, in addressing wildlife killing contests, similarly stated: "...we do not believe such short-term hunts will...bolster populations of deer or other game species."<sup>14</sup> Regarding the effect of coyote control on deer and game bird populations specifically, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation found that "random removal of coyotes resulting from a year-round hunting season will not...result in an increase in deer densities."<sup>15</sup>

In a 2014 deer harvest report, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources concluded that trying to control coyotes to manage deer predation was ineffective.<sup>16</sup> North Carolina researchers evaluated deer harvest numbers in South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, New Jersey, and New York and found that coyotes are not limiting deer numbers in those states, and that coyote removal programs do little to increase regional deer numbers.<sup>17</sup> The West Virginia Department of Natural Resources has found: "[p]redator control of coyotes because of wildlife predation is unwarranted and unnecessary."<sup>18</sup> Regarding game birds, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission found that coyotes actually benefit game bird species because they suppress populations of smaller predators and because "most coyote diet studies document low to no prevalence of wild turkey or other gamebirds in diets."<sup>19</sup> These findings demonstrate that this common rationale for holding killing contests that target carnivores is scientifically unfounded.

### **3. Wildlife killing contests do not prevent conflicts with humans, pets, or livestock—and may increase them.**

Killing contests are not effective in removing individual, problem-causing animals.<sup>20</sup> Most killing contests target carnivores in woodlands and grasslands where conflicts with humans, livestock, and pets are minimal. Studies have found that killing carnivores fragments social groups and can create ecological voids that may be filled by smaller carnivores with higher population numbers that may prey on livestock.<sup>21</sup> In a signed statement, more than 70 conservation scientists made the following finding about the effect of indiscriminately killing carnivores on livestock depredation:

Some advocates of wildlife killing contests (WKC)s believe they are necessary or beneficial for effective management of livestock depredation. We indicated that WKC)s are unlikely to have this effect. The reason why is that most individual predators do not participate in livestock depredations. Consequently, effective management of depredation requires (1) targeting the offending individual(s), and (2) intervening close to the site where the depredations occurred as well as responding in a timely manner. WKC)s do not represent the kind of targeted effort required for effective management of livestock depredations. Moreover, indiscriminate killing of predators is likely to exacerbate risks to livestock. The reason is that killing social carnivores like coyotes (and wolves) can lead to the disruption of predators' social and foraging ecology in ways

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nature/field-guide/coyote; West Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources, Eastern Coyote Impacts Of The Eastern Coyote On Wildlife Populations. Available at: <http://www.wvdnr.gov/hunting/CoyoteResearch.shtm>; Dave Rippe, Predator Control and Wildlife, Wyoming Game and Fish Dept., Habitat Extension Bulletin: No. 57 (July 1995). Available at: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Habitat/Extension%20Bulletins/B57-Predator-Control-and-Wildlife.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Jeff Mulhollem, *Pennsylvania Game Commissioners Reply to Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania on Predator Questions*, Outdoor News (July 33, 2016). Available at: <https://www.outdoornews.com/2016/07/22/pennsylvania-game-commissioners-reply-to-unified-sportsmen-of-pennsylvania-on-predators-questions/>.

<sup>14</sup> 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>.

<sup>15</sup> New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, The Status and Impact of Eastern Coyotes in Northern New York (June 1991). Available at: <http://www.nysenvirothon.org/Referencesandother/coyotes.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Ruth, 2014 South Carolina Deer Harvest Report, South Carolina Dept. of Natural Resources. Available at: <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/deer/2014DeerHarvest.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Eugenia V. Bragina et al., *Effects on white-tailed deer following eastern coyote colonization*, 83 J. of Wildlife Mgmt. 916 (2019).

<sup>18</sup> West Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources, Impacts of the Eastern Coyote on Wildlife Populations. Available at: <http://wvdnr.gov/hunting/CoyoteResearch.shtm>.

<sup>19</sup> North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Coyote Management Plan 16 (2018).

<sup>20</sup> Adrian Treves et al., *Predator Control Should Not Be a Shot In the Dark*, 14 Front Ecol Environ 380, 381 (2016). Available at: [http://faculty.nelson.wisc.edu/treves/pubs/Treves\\_Krofel\\_McManus.pdf](http://faculty.nelson.wisc.edu/treves/pubs/Treves_Krofel_McManus.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Id.

that increase the number of transient individuals. These transient individuals that have not been acculturated (aversively conditioned) to living in areas with livestock may be more likely to kill livestock.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, exploited coyote packs are more likely to have increased numbers of pups, and feeding more young has been found to be a significant motivation for coyotes to pursue livestock.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, common arguments about impacts of predator-livestock conflict are exaggerated. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (“USDA”), only 0.39 percent of cattle and sheep were lost to all carnivores combined (including coyotes, unknown predators, and dogs).<sup>24</sup> The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has noted that, based on USDA data, dogs are an equal or greater risk to sheep, goats, and cattle as compared to coyotes.<sup>25</sup> Disease, illness, birthing problems, and weather constitute the overwhelming cause of livestock mortality.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. Wildlife killing contests contravene hunting ethics.

Wildlife killing contests violate fundamental principles of ethical hunting, and the majority of Maryland residents are likely to view enthusiasm for the mass killing of animals as barbaric, cruel, and wasteful, which could gravely taint the image of sportsmen and sportswomen and of hunting in general. State agencies and officials have acknowledged the damage that killing contests inflict on the tradition of hunting:

- Dan Gibbs, hunter and executive director of Colorado Department of Natural Resources, has stated, “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.”<sup>27</sup>
- The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has recognized that killing contests “...could possibly jeopardize the future of hunting and affect access to private lands for all hunters.”<sup>28</sup>
- The Arizona Game and Fish Commission made a similar statement: “...[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.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Statement in Opposition to Wildlife Killing Contests: Signed By More Than 70 Conservation Scientists. Project Coyote (May 23, 2019). Available at <http://www.projectcoyote.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SAB-Letter-Against-WKCs-2019.05.23-FINAL.pdf>. See also F.F. Knowlton, et al., *Coyote depredation control: An interface between biology and management*, 52 J. Range Mgmt. 398 (1999); J.D.C. Linnell et al., *Large carnivores that kill livestock: do problem individuals really exist?*, 27 Wildlife Society Bulletin 698 (1999); P. Stahl and J.M. Vandel, *Factors influencing lynx depredation on sheep in France: Problem individuals and habitat*, 4 Carnivore Damage Prevention News 6 (2001); K.M. Blejwas et al., *The effectiveness of selective removal of breeding coyotes in reducing sheep predation*, 66 J. Wildlife Mgmt. 451 (2002); A. Treves et al., *Wolf depredation on domestic animals: control and compensation in Wisconsin, 1976-2000*, 30 Wildlife Society Bulletin 231 (2002); A. Treves and L. Naughton-Treves, *Evaluating lethal control in the management of human-wildlife conflict*, in *People and Wildlife, Conflict or Coexistence* 86 (R. Woodroffe et al., eds., 2005); E. Bangs and J.A. Shivik, *Managing wolf conflict with livestock in the northwestern United States*, USDA National Wildlife Research Center-Staff Publications 550 (2001); A. Treves et al., *American black bear nuisance complaints and hunter take*, 21 Ursus 30 (2010); K.A. Peebles et al., *Effects of remedial sport hunting on cougar complaints and livestock depredations*, 8 PLoS ONE e79713 (2013). Available at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0079713>; R.B. Wielgus and K. A. Peebles, *Effects of Wolf Mortality on Livestock Depredations*, 9 PLoS ONE e113505 (2014).

<sup>23</sup> F. F. Knowlton, et al., *Coyote Depredation Control: An Interface between Biology and Management*, 52 J. of Range Mgmt. 398, 403 (1999). Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/43f7/3adf647447dd472db69c0b4712f1c71fab33.pdf>; B. R. Mitchell et al., *Coyote Depredation Management: Current Methods and Research Needs*, 32 Wildlife Society Bulletin 1209 (2004).

<sup>24</sup> See U.S. Dept. Agriculture, *Cattle and Calves Death Loss in the United States Due to Predator and Nonpredator Causes, 2015* (2015). Available at: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/nahms/general/downloads/cattle\\_calves\\_deathloss\\_2015.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahms/general/downloads/cattle_calves_deathloss_2015.pdf); U.S. Dept. Agriculture, *Sheep and Lamb Predator and Nonpredator Death Loss in the United States, 2015* (2015). Available at: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/nahms/sheep/downloads/sheepdeath/SheepDeathLoss2015.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahms/sheep/downloads/sheepdeath/SheepDeathLoss2015.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, *Coyote Management Plan 10* (2018).

<sup>26</sup> Id.

<sup>27</sup> Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission Meeting, April 30, 2020 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vk7x\\_gx5PY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Vk7x_gx5PY)

<sup>28</sup> 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>.

<sup>29</sup> 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>.

- Mike Finley, chair of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission stated: “...[k]illing 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.”<sup>30</sup> He also called the contests “slaughter fests” and “stomach-turning examples of wanton waste.”<sup>31</sup>
- The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife has also found: “...public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting and undermine public support for hunting in general[.]”
- Ted Chu, former wildlife manager with Idaho Fish and Game, has said, “Hunting is not a contest and it should never be a competitive activity about who can kill the most or the biggest animals.”<sup>32</sup>
- Ray Powell, the former New Mexico Commissioner of State Lands, stated: “The non-specific, indiscriminate killing methods used in this commercial and unrestricted coyote killing contest are not about hunting or sound land management. These contests are about personal profit, animal cruelty...It is time to outlaw this highly destructive activity.”<sup>33</sup>
- Jim Zieler, hunter and chair of the Arizona Game & Fish Commission, said, “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.’”<sup>34</sup>

## 5. Seven states have banned wildlife killing contests.

In 2014, the California Fish and Game Commission banned killing contests targeting game species, furbearers, and nongame mammals. In 2018, the Vermont General Assembly banned coyote killing contests. In 2019, the New Mexico General Legislature banned coyote killing contests, and both the Arizona Fish and Game Commission and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife banned killing contests for predator and furbearer species. In 2020, Colorado Parks and Wildlife prohibited contests for furbearers like coyotes and black-tailed, white-tailed and Gunnison’s prairie dogs and Wyoming (Richardson’s) ground squirrel, and Washington state banned killing contests for species including coyotes, bobcats, crows, foxes, and raccoons.

## 6. Conclusion

Wildlife killing contests have no place in a civil society or in modern wildlife management. We therefore ask for your support for HB 293 to end them in Maryland. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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*Encl.*

<sup>30</sup> 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>.

<sup>31</sup> 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>.

<sup>32</sup> 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](https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/opinion/columnists/the_new_west_todd_wilkinson/article_260cbc66-0bf6-544b-bcf2-b5e9220247bb.html).

<sup>33</sup> Ray Powell, Letter to Mark Chavez, owner of Gunhawk Firearms, Nov. 15, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> “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/>



## Maryland's gruesome wildlife killing contests exposed

Investigators with the Humane Society of the United States capture wanton slaughter of Maryland's wildlife, stressing the need for state legislation to ban these cruel events.



In January and February 2020, undercover investigators from the Humane Society of the United States recorded the aftermath of two wildlife killing contests in which participants competed to kill the most, and the heaviest foxes, coyotes and raccoons for cash and prizes.

For both contests, participants used digital devices that play animal distress calls to lure animals to their deaths.

### **"Predator Hunters of Maryland," Unionville, Maryland**

On January 19, 2020, at the weigh-in station located at a small community hall (Linganore Grange #410), investigators witnessed and documented the aftermath of the Predator Hunters of Maryland contest, including:

- 200 to 250 animals piled up for counting and, in some cases, weighing.
- Children playing among piles of dead animals.
- Contestants unloading bloody animals from their pickup trucks, some of whom have massive injuries and are ripped apart by bullets.
- Contestants celebrating and handing out prizes for their killing.

#### The HSUS investigations learned that:

- The contest winner killed 38 foxes.
- The tournament was open to participants in the entire state of Maryland.
- Coyote kills earned five points, fox kills earned three points, and raccoons earned one point.
- Contestants paid entry fees of \$50 for a two-person team and \$25 for individuals.
- Entry fees were used mostly for cash prizes.
- The first-place prize was around \$400.
- Prizes were also awarded for the heaviest coyote, the heaviest fox and the heaviest raccoon killed.



While participants told HSUS investigators that killing contests create balance in nature because "...people aren't wearing fur anymore and the fox population gets out of control," in fact the opposite is true. Foxes provide balance in nature as they control rodent populations, and, like all wild carnivores, they regulate their own numbers according to available habitat and food.

HSUS investigators also clearly heard contestants discussing their plans to dump their dead animals at a landfill after the contest.

### **"The Southern Maryland Predator Hunt," Waldorf, Maryland**

On February 2, 2020, HSUS investigators attended the weigh-in of a killing contest open to participants in Charles, Calvert, Prince George's, and St. Mary's Counties. The weigh-in was held at the Fred's Outdoors store in Waldorf, where investigators witnessed pickup trucks loaded with dead red and grey foxes.

The HSUS investigators learned that:

- The winning team brought in 27 foxes during the approximately 16-hour allowable killing window.
- Dozens of two- to three-person teams participated in the killing contest.
- All of the entry fee money (at least \$2,000) went to the winners.
- Participants used digital calling devices manufactured by FoxPro—a frequent sponsor of wildlife killing contests nationwide—to lure foxes to their deaths.

A contest participant also attempted to justify the killing by explaining that foxes kill turkeys. However, the National Wild Turkey Federation advises that the random removal of wild carnivores will not result in more turkeys for hunters, and that turkeys have evolved to cope with natural predation. The organization instead recommends that hunters cultivate good habitat that allows turkeys to thrive.\*



All photos by the HSUS.

\*The National Wild Turkey Federation: "Coexist with predators" at [www.nwtf.org/conservation/article/coexist-predators](http://www.nwtf.org/conservation/article/coexist-predators).