

PROJECT COYOTE

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December 13, 2019

Rebecca Noecker
St. Paul City Council
15 Kellogg Blvd. W., Room 310
St. Paul, MN 55102

Dear Councilmember Noecker,

On behalf of our Minnesota supporters, Project Coyote, a national nonprofit that advocates for compassionate conservation and coexistence with native carnivores, is strongly in support of a resolution by the St. Paul City Council that opposes wildlife killing contests. During this barbaric bloodsport, participants compete to kill wild animals—coyotes, foxes, and other species—for entertainment and prizes. After the killing is over, participants frequently take photos grinning next to the dead animals and then dump the bodies away from the public eye.

Recent events in Minnesota include Hough Fur's 1st Annual Coyote Tournament in Downer, Predator Hunt in Madison, Coyote Hunt in Wabasso, 11th Annual Sacred Heart Jaycee's Dog Days of Winter Coyote Hunt in Sacred Heart, Minndak Coyote Tournament in Randolph, West Metro Coyote Tournament in Watertown, Buffalo Ridge Coyote Hunting Tournament in Marshall, and Coyote Tournament in Oak Grove.

We encourage you to pass a resolution condemning killing contests for the following reasons:

- **Killing contests are counterproductive to sound wildlife management.** The best available, peer-reviewed science shows that indiscriminately killing coyotes is ineffective and a threat to healthy ecosystems. There is no credible evidence that randomly killing coyotes—the most frequent target in killing contests—effectively serves any beneficial wildlife management purpose. Indiscriminately killing coyotes does not reduce their populations—in fact, it stimulates increases in their populations by disrupting their social structure, which encourages more breeding and migration. Additionally, lethal control will not increase the abundance of game species such as deer or pheasants. Rather than focusing on any one species, coyotes are opportunists who eat a diverse diet including small mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, fish, insects, fruit, and vegetables. Rabbits and rodents are generally their top choice. Over 70 prominent conservation scientists condemn coyote killing contests—their signed statement is available [here](#).¹ Project Coyote's Science Advisory Board explains more about why killing coyotes is ecologically destructive and counterproductive [here](#).²
- **Coyotes, foxes, and other wildlife species play a crucial ecological role and provide a range of free, natural ecological services in urban and rural settings.** Coyotes, for example, directly or indirectly help to control disease transmission, keep rodent populations in check, consume animal carcasses, increase biodiversity, remove sick animals from the gene pool, and protect crops. Unexploited coyote populations can contribute to ecosystem health through trophic cascade effects such as indirectly protecting ground-nesting birds from smaller carnivores and increasing the biological diversity of

PROJECT COYOTE

F O S T E R I N G C O E X I S T E N C E



plant and wildlife communities.³ State wildlife management agencies across the country recognize the benefits that coyotes provide to ecosystems.

- **Wildlife killing contests are cruel and unsporting.** These events are no different than dogfighting and cockfighting, which are outlawed nationwide. Countless animals may be injured or orphaned during the events. Participants often use electronic calling devices that mimic the sounds of prey or coyotes in distress, thereby manipulating animals' natural curiosity or compassion to lure them in for an easy kill. The public views killing contests as wanton waste and a violation of traditional hunting ethics that encourage respect for wildlife and their habitats.
- **State wildlife agencies and policymakers increasingly recognize the ethical and ecological problems associated with killing contests and the threat the events pose to the future of hunting.** In the last several years, New Mexico and Vermont outlawed coyote killing contests; Arizona prohibited them for predatory and furbearing species; and California banned them for nongame and furbearing animals. Massachusetts is poised to ban the events for a wide range of wildlife species in 2019. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife recently recognized that "public controversy over this issue has the potential to threaten predator hunting and undermine public support for hunting in general."⁴ Hunter and chairman of the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission Mike Finley recently called the contests "slaughter fests" and "stomach-turning examples of wanton waste."⁵ Former president of the California Fish and Game Commission and waterfowl hunter Mike Sutton denounced them as "unethical" and "an anachronism [with] no place in modern wildlife management."⁶ The Arizona Game and Fish Commission similarly observed that "...public outrage with these events has the potential to threaten hunting as a legitimate wildlife management function."⁷
- **Wildlife killing contests and other indiscriminate, lethal control methods will not prevent conflicts with humans, pets or livestock—and may increase them.** Disrupting the coyote family structure may increase coyote attacks. Exploited coyote populations tend to have younger, less experienced coyotes that haven't been taught appropriate hunting behaviors. These coyotes are more likely to prey on easy targets like livestock or pets. Additionally, exploited coyote packs are more likely to have increased numbers of yearlings reproducing and higher pup survival. Feeding pups is a significant motivation for coyotes to switch from killing small and medium-sized prey to killing sheep. Open hunts and killing contests do not target specific, problem-causing coyotes. Most killing contests target coyotes in woodlands and grasslands where conflicts with humans, livestock, and pets are minimal—not coyotes who have become habituated by human-provided attractants such as unsecured garbage, pet food, or livestock carcasses.⁸
- **Prevention—not lethal control—is the best method for minimizing conflicts with coyotes in urban and rural settings.** Claims that coyotes attack humans and pets and threaten livestock are greatly exaggerated.⁹ Even so, it's important to prevent conflicts before they occur. Eliminating access to easy food sources, such as bird seed and garbage, supervising pets while outside, and keeping cats indoors reduces conflicts with pets and humans. Practicing good animal husbandry and using

PROJECT COYOTE

F O S T E R I N G C O E X I S T E N C E



strategic, nonlethal predator control methods to protect livestock (such as electric fences, guard animals, and removing dead livestock) are more effective than lethal control at preventing conflicts.¹⁰ For more information, see Project Coyote’s [Coyote Friendly Communities™](#) and [Ranching with Wildlife](#) programs on our website [ProjectCoyote.org](#).

These events are ecologically destructive, ineffective, morally bankrupt, and a threat to the future of hunting. Our Minnesota supporters, including citizens of St. Paul, do not support this bloodsport. For the reasons stated above, we strongly support a St. Paul City Council resolution condemning wildlife killing contests in Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to discuss this issue further, please contact me at info@projectcoyote.org or (415) 945-3232.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Camilla H. Fox". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Camilla H. Fox
Executive Director

¹ “Statement in opposition to wildlife killing contests,” (May 2019) available at <http://www.projectcoyote.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SAB-Letter-Against-WKCs-2019.05.23-FINAL.pdf>.

² Project Coyote Science Advisory Board, “Why killing coyotes doesn’t work,” Project Coyote (Feb. 5, 2019) available at http://www.projectcoyote.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/PC_SAB_Coyote-Facts_FINAL_2.5.19.pdf.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, “MassWildlife proposes regulations to ban predator contests and prohibit wanton waste,” Mass.gov (July 25, 2019), available at <https://www.mass.gov/news/masswildlife-proposes-regulations-to-ban-predator-contests-and-prohibit-wanton-waste>.

⁵ 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>.

⁶ “Coyote Carnage: The Gruesome Truth about Wildlife Killing Contests,” Yale Environment 360 (May 22, 2018) available at <https://e360.yale.edu/features/coyote-carnage-the-gruesome-truth-about-wildlife-killing-contests>.

⁷ The 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>.

⁸ *Id.* at 2.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*