

PROJECT COYOTE

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



California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
Sent via email: fgc@fgc.ca.gov

March 4, 2014

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of Project Coyote and our California supporters I want to thank you for voting in support of agendizing the issue of ending wildlife- killing contests to allow all Californians to weigh in on this issue. Attached is my testimony and that of our other Project Coyote representatives who testified on this issue at the February 5th Fish and Game Commission meeting in Sacramento for the benefit of those Commissioners who were not there. I'm also attaching a list of predator killing contests that we have identified in California that includes websites and photographs from those contests. Because the state does not monitor these contests we do not know how many take place statewide; we believe the attached is likely just the tip of the iceberg. The more research we do, the more we find how common these are.

A disturbing trend that we are finding is the blatant legalized cruelty associated with some wildlife killing contests. I'm attaching photographs pulled from the website California Critters-- <http://californiacatchers.com/index.asp?ID=22> As you will see these photographs depict clear animal cruelty – both to wildlife (in this case coyotes) and to domestic dogs. There are attorney analyzing the potential violation of the state's animal cruelty statute with regard to the harm to domestic dogs. However, the cruelty depicted to coyotes is currently legal in California because California Fish and Game regulations and statutes allow the direct taking/killing of coyotes (and other wildlife) with hounds.

In some of these contests where hounds are used it is clear that prizes and inducements are offered; in others it is not. As you develop the regulatory package specific to wildlife killing contests we respectfully request that you consider restricting methods of take to prohibit those practices that promote animal cruelty and give a black eye to the ethical sportsmen of this state. We also hope that you will consider implementing bag and possession limits on predators, particularly those that are classified as non-game or furbearer and can be taken year round in unlimited numbers. Project Coyote raised these very issues in our comments regarding California's predator policies, regulations and statutes (attached), which was the first task put forth the Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) Predator Policy Working Group.

As mentioned in testimony and in our comments Project Coyote commends the Commission for recognizing that the state's predator policies, regulations and statutes are out of date and in need of reform and we offer our assistance in providing guidance and expertise toward this goal.

Thank you for your consideration; I would welcome the opportunity to discuss further. I can be reached at 415-690-0338.

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

Camilla H. Fox
Founder & Executive Director

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My name is Camilla Fox and I'm the executive director of Project Coyote.

Last year we testified before you regarding Coyote Drive 2013—a coyote-killing contest in Modoc County and surrounding areas. As you may recall that killing contest generated tremendous public outcry and national media attention. We submitted a letter on behalf of 25 organizations representing more than one million Californians asking that this contest be stopped based on ecological and ethical concerns. In addition more than 20,000 letters, emails and petition signatures were submitted to the Commission and the Department.

That same contest is happening again this year, in fact, this coming weekend. While the Wildlife Resources Committee has taken on the issue of predator management reform we believe there are many reasons for the Commission to move forward now on banning this practice statewide.

What's at issue, is the wanton waste of wildlife and the awarding of prizes and inducements to kill as many individuals as possible... and the largest. This is obviously not about sport or fair-chase.

Wildlife killing contests are conducted for profit, entertainment, prizes and, simply, for the "fun" of killing. No evidence exists showing that such indiscriminate killing contests control problem animals or serve any beneficial management function as discussed by Dr. Crabtree.

Moreover such contests perpetuate a culture of violence and send the message to children that life has little value and that an entire species of animals is disposable.

Section 2003 of the California code was created in the early 1990s specifically to end the mass killing of wildlife through contests. The section was written to cover **all** species as it was recognized that many species from big game to predators to waterfowl were killed for prizes and other inducements. That section reads:

“Except as specified in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d), it is unlawful to offer any prize or other inducement as a reward for the taking of any game birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, or amphibians in an individual contest, tournament, or derby.”

The intent is clear.

Sections b and c exempt frog-jumping and fish contests. We are not suggesting these be changed. Section (d) provides a gaping loophole. This section states: “This section does not apply to any person conducting an individual contest, tournament, or derby for the taking of game birds and

mammals, if the total value of all prizes or other inducements is less than five hundred dollars (\$500) for the individual contest, tournament, or derby.”

This loophole contravenes the intent of section 2003 which is to eliminate **any** prize or other inducement as a reward for the taking of wildlife. A simple rule to eliminate this loophole will rectify this issue and remove such incentives for the mass killing of wildlife.

We urge you to use your authority to regulate and restrict take by initiating a rulemaking process to prohibit wildlife killing contests — thus modernizing predator management, conservation and stewardship statewide- and setting the trend for the rest of the nation — as we do so well here in California.

Thank you.

2003.

(a) Except as specified in subdivisions (b), (c), and (d), it is unlawful to offer any prize or other inducement as a reward for the taking of any game birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, or amphibians in an individual contest, tournament, or derby.

(b) The department may issue a permit to any person authorizing that person to offer a prize or other inducement as a reward for the taking of any game fish, as defined by the commission by regulation, if it finds that there would be no detriment to the resource. The permit is subject to regulations adopted by the commission. The application for the permit shall be accompanied by a fee in the amount determined by the department as necessary to cover the reasonable administrative costs incurred by the department in issuing the permit. However, the department may waive the permit fee if the contest, tournament, or derby is for persons under the age of 16 years, or who are physically or mentally challenged, the primary purpose of the contest, tournament, or derby is to introduce young anglers to, or educate them about fishing. All permits for which the fee is waived pursuant to this subdivision shall comply with all other requirements set forth in this section.

(c) This section does not apply to any person conducting what are generally known as frog-jumping contests or fish contests conducted in waters of the Pacific Ocean.

(d) This section does not apply to any person conducting an individual contest, tournament, or derby for the taking of game birds and mammals, if the total value of all prizes or other inducements is less than five hundred dollars (\$500) for the individual contest, tournament, or derby.

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My name is Bob Crabtree and I am founder and Chief Scientist of the Yellowstone Ecological Research Center and a faculty at the University of Montana. I am also on the Science Advisory Board of Project Coyote which includes many of the top carnivore biologists in the continent.

As a scientist, I'm here today to express my support for California's efforts to reform predator management and to bring the state's regulations and policies inline with three standards: current science, conservation biology, and ecological principles. As such, I believe the first and most logical step is to do away with what we know violates these standards: wildlife-killing contests.

The role of predators in maintaining healthy ecosystems is now receiving long overdue attention. In fact, I was just talking to another member of Project Coyote's Science Advisory Board, Dr. Michael Soule, who is a founding father of conservation biology in large part for his pioneering work on the surprising role of coyotes as a keystone species that when removed caused a 'release' or increase of smaller subordinate mesopredators that had been held in check by coyotes. The subsequent effect of this mesopredator release was manifold in its detrimental impacts on the prey species of mesopredators like raccoons, skunks, and foxes. Decreases in ground nesting birds, amphibians, and smaller mammals resulted. This now classic study was done in the great state of California. It stands as one of many that documents the wide-ranging impact or 'trophic cascade' effects caused by decreases or disruptions of apex carnivores (bears, canids, felids, and members of the weasel family). Bottom line: apex predators hold an inordinate amount of 'catalyst' in food webs, that is, changes in their distribution and numbers can have profound top-down effects compared to similar impacts on species lower on the food chain where there is often ecological or species redundancy—the role of one species can be replaced by another. Not so at the top of the food chain.

Previously, I had provided a summary of the effects of exploitation on coyotes and other apex predators. It included 20 effects as a result of killing or removal—any event that reduces population size and stability. These 20 are based on scientific research and are in addition to the trophic cascade and mesopredator release effects just mentioned.

Combined, these 'effects' clearly chronicle the stunning value of apex predators when left alone, that is, not killed, removed, or having their habitat destroyed. It also documents the complete ineffectiveness of predator removal or killing as a means to increase game populations such as deer, elk, moose, pronghorn and other game birds including nesting waterfowl. In many cases, removal of coyotes actually increases the number of domestic livestock depredations through increases in the number of surviving pups.

Thus, there is no scientific basis or evidence to substantiate the claim that predator-killing contests increases game populations or decreases depredations on livestock.

As we look to modernize the state's predator policies and regulations, the first step would be to reform what is most egregious and blatantly incongruent with science-based, wildlife management: Banning wildlife-killing. As a scientist well versed in predator-prey relations, I offer my expertise in whatever way I can help the state in its laudable endeavor to reform predator management and make California a leader on this front.

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My name is Keli Hendricks and I am here, as I was last year, to question why California continues to allow wildlife-killing contests to take place in this state.

This weekend the town of Adin in Modoc County is hosting a killing contest like it has every Feb for the last 7 years. Contests like these are held across the country and they award prizes in categories like 'most coyotes killed', best 'junk kills' (which was described as badgers, skunks and other vermin) and extra points are often given for killing pregnant females.

Organizers of these contests claim that the prophylactic killing of predators is needed to protect livestock. They conveniently ignore that the majority of animals killed by traps, killing contests, aerial gunnings, poisons and snares have probably never bothered anything outside of their natural prey and likely never will.

My husband and I run 300 mother cows that calve safely in pastures alongside coyote packs and we use only non-lethal livestock protection methods. I am also on the advisory board of Project Coyote, where I help spread the message that with open minds, ranchers and predators can coexist.

Killing random predators is about as effective at protecting livestock as bailing harder is at saving a sinking boat. It might help for a short time, but the only real solution is to fix the hole in the boat.

The way to fix that hole is to implement one or more of the many non-lethal livestock protection methods available to ranchers today. There are ranchers raising sheep and cattle successfully in challenging areas and around predators ranging from mountain lions to wolves using only non-lethal protection methods.

Predators have as much right to the land as our livestock and we should let them do their job, which is keeping rodent populations under control and our pastures healthier. A single coyote can eat 1800 rodents a year and stable coyote packs can limit the use of rodenticides, which are causing secondary poisonings of raptors and other animals all the way up the food chain. Coyotes mate for life and they are one of the few mammals that remain monogamous. They have strong family bonds and the males raise the pups right alongside the females. These are traits many humans fail to live up to.

They feel pain and fear and love and loss and have the same capacity for suffering as any family pet, probably more.

There is no place in today's society for archaic and ineffective practices like killing contests, and most Californian's don't support the abuse of animals simply for the sake of human entertainment. This commission can send the message to the rest of the nation that in California, we no longer condone events where native wildlife is used for target practice simply to appease a few special interest groups.

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California Catcher

Patterdale Terriers and Argentine Dog

<http://californiacatchers.com/index.asp?ID=22>

"ROCKET" HIT THIS YOTE FULL SPEED AND KNOCKED HIM OFF HIS FEET



WORKING SIGHT HOUNDS



LEAVE NOW! GRAPHIC PICS BELOW!!



THESE YOTES WERE ALL DISPATCHED IN SECONDS.

"SNIPER" UNDER A YEAR OLD, JAW TO JAW WITH A YOTE. TAIL UP AND NO SCREAMING, THIS IS A VERY HARD JAGD. FEMALE BULLTERRIER IS ALSO UNDER A YEAR OLD AND IS JUST ABOUT TO HELP HER BUDDIES OUT WITH CALIFORNIA'S NUMBER ONE PREDATOR.



BULL TERRIER ABOUT TO TAKE A HOLD





TRUST ME, THIS YOTE IS ABOUT TO LET GO OF THE JAGDS FACE. DOGOS CANT RUN DOWN A YOTE, BUT THEY CAN SHUT ONE DOWN REAL QUICK. DOGO ON LEFT AND BULLTERRIER ON RIGHT.



THE POWER OF THE BULLY/LURCHER IS AMAZING. "ROCKET" IS THE REAL DEAL.



JAGD AND BULLTERRIER STOPPING THIS YOTE FROM GRABBING "ROCKET" BY THE HEAD.



"CYCLONE" AND "SNIPER"







COYOTES ARE DANGEROUS ANIMALS.. "TROUBLE" AFTER A COYOTE ENCOUNTER.

ALL NEW DESIGN!





I DO NOT HAVE COYOTE DECOY DOGS..MY DOGS DO NOT RUN FROM COYOTES.. THEY RUN AT THEM!



"Monster" and "Trouble"



This coyote is reaching for "Monster", but "Trouble" and one of the Dogos have got him just about shut down.



"Monster" and "Gator"



"Trouble" chocolate patterdale on right is a pup in this picture.



"Trouble" is a grown dog here



WARNING!! THIS IS NOT WHAT THE PATERDALE WAS INTENDED FOR. But, I use my dogs a lot for hunting and blood trailing coyotes (along with other breeds). Some of these coyotes are already dead when the dogs get there and some are still very much alive. If anyone out there is planning on using Patterdales alone on coyotes...dont try it. The local coyotes will be very happy with you for keeping them well fed and their bellies full of fresh dog. My Patterdales are bred to be very hard. I can't turn them out on their own after coyotes. The Patterdale, in my mind, is one of the gamest of dogs and for that reason the Patterdale does not fear the coyote. My Patterdales will go face to face with a coyote. So, I always have larger breeds of dogs there that can shut a coyote down real quick. Just in case I am unable to take a shot, I need dogs there that can stop the coyote real quick (Dogos help a lot). Many times I have been digging to my terriers in the ground and decided to take a break and looked up to see a coyote within 30 feet of me. The coyotes would come in to the sounds of the fighting. All that stopped once I got the Dogos.



Look at the size of those teeth. Coyotes in this area are expert small dog and cat killers.





The pic below shows that coyote work is tough even on big dogs.





The coyote below tried to grab the Dogo by the top of the head but Trouble was fast enough to take his favorite hold.





This coyote had made it into the orchards after being wounded by a farmer. The dogs tracked him down and finished him very quickly.



"Rocket" and "Doba" after a coyote, Dogos are fast but they can not run like a bully lurcher (very few breeds can).



Dogo pups July 2010



Monster and Gator below.



The female coyote below was very small for this area but still had huge teeth.



