

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee,
The Honorable Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
The Honorable Senator Kim Thatcher, Vice Chair
The Honorable Senator Cliff Bentz
The Honorable Senator Shemia Fagan
The Honorable Senator Sara Gelsler
The Honorable Senator Dennis Linthicum
The Honorable Senator James Manning

Thank you for your time and consideration of SB 723-2.

I live on acreage, in rural Clackamas County, with horses.

Coyote Killing Contests (like one held in November in Burns) offer rewards to participants who shoot indiscriminately hundreds of coyotes, be they vital alfa males or nursing mothers. As I understand this gratuitous killing game, whoever has killed the largest animal and/or the most pounds of flesh, wins prizes or cash. From information documented by The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) investigation has shown that some participants joke about how they lure animals to their death and laugh while posing with rows of the animals strung up by their hind legs. This is unacceptable.

It seems obvious to me that these mass killings defy basic practices of stewardship and "fair chase" by having so many people killing a species in one area during one period of time (usually a weekend). Innocent animals can hardly hide. Protected wolves could easily be mistaken for the intended target.

I care about Oregon Wildlife, and am concerned about the growing negative attitude towards our coyotes, as if they are trash that needs collecting and disposing. This makes them very vulnerable to cruelty. I personally am thrilled to watch a coyote in my pastures. These skillful hunters help limit the populations of voles, moles, and mice (the critters that tend to create dangerous holes all over on my land). I am careful by not leaving cat food out and keep my dog and animals with great care, bringing them in at night and not leaving them unattended for long periods.

Furthermore, this bill does not stop a rancher or farmer from killing coyotes that wander onto their land, nor does it stop them from killing a coyote. Period.

Coyotes have no protection from cruelty, abuse, and inhumane practices, practices that include a killing contest.

I have heard this all before, about killing predators to "save livestock" or to increase deer and other game populations. It never quite works. Extreme depletion of a species has detrimental habitat effects and has been proven, over time, to increase, not decrease species population. Disrupting the social structure of a species and sudden population depletion stimulate increased breeding. The alfa pair is naturally the single breeding pair; but if these vital animals are killed off for entertainment, the young, inexperienced animals breed and breeding overall increases. Delicate and balanced ecosystems are damaged. As I stated above, coyotes keep in check rodent populations and other smaller carnivores. This results in reduced small-predator populations, which thusly protects ground-nesting birds, for example. As a bird-watching Oregonian, I take interest in the way coyotes are managed in Oregon.

Again, banning coyote killing contests does not stop a rancher from shooting a coyote. It stops damaging, inhumane, massive slaughtering of coyotes.

Oregon is better than this. Oregon has a majority population that cares about humane treatment of animals. Oregon coyotes belong to all of us and should be managed with care and intelligence and compassion. Please ban coyote killing games and contests in Oregon. They are my coyotes, too.

Finally, if farmers and ranchers living in rural Oregon heard of a practice, say, in Western Oregon, that damages habitat and cruelly treats wildlife, they would be correct to contact their legislators and ask to curtail such practices. All of Oregon, all our legislative body, needs to act to intervene when wrong is being done anywhere in our state. There is a responsibility to all Oregon and all Oregonians, regardless of region. Somewhere there is a moral line that should not be crossed. This SB 723-2 helps to identify that line, a moral line that apparently is missing or is being blatantly ignored.

I cannot begin to grasp the horrifying effect these killing games have on young adults and children. Gratuitous violence, ungrateful treatment of wildlife, frivolous use of guns and inhumane desecration of coyotes can only proliferate more of the same, especially when young minds are exposed so such activities.

I love our coyotes. If they be killed, let them be killed with respect, gratitude and fair chase, under the supervision of proper stewardship and management, which means saving the larger coyotes and nursing mothers, not slaughtering them.

I urge you to support this bill. Oregon banned cockfighting and canned hunting. Those laws help create a moral line which should not be crossed. We need SB 723-2 to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jane Bicquette