

Readers respond: Coyote killing contests unnecessarily cruel

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LC- Staff

A coyote wanders in SW Portland near the Oregon Zoo, Dec. 15, 2016. Mike Zacchino/Staff LC-Staff

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It's unacceptable Oregon allows cruel wildlife killing contests. Recent examples include the Oregon Farm Bureau-sponsored Young Farmers & Ranchers First Annual Coyote Hunting Tournament in Burns, the Annual Lake County Coyote Calling Derby in Lakeview, the Harney County Coyote Classic in Burns and the JMK Coyote Hunt in Bend.

In these gruesome events, participants compete for cash and prizes for killing the most or heaviest coyotes, foxes, bobcats and other species. A recent Humane Society of the United States undercover investigation showed contest participants piling up coyotes and foxes they had killed -- laughing and posing for photos in front of the dead animals.

There's no point to this. Studies show that the mass slaughter of coyotes won't protect livestock or reduce coyote numbers. In fact, it could increase the population by destabilizing family structures and allowing more coyotes to reproduce.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission stated in 2016, "After decades of using predator control (such as paying bounties) with no effect, and the emergence of wildlife management as a science, the agency finally accepted the reality that predator control does not work."

Coyotes do vital work like balancing ecosystems, protecting ground-nesting birds from smaller carnivores, protecting crops, and controlling rodent populations -- curtailing hantavirus, a rodent-borne illness that has infected 23 people in Oregon since 1993. Wildlife killing contests are an affront to science-based wildlife management and the humane values held by most Oregonians. Our state should ban them.

-- *Andrea Kozil, Portland*

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