

January 26' 2018
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Coyote Testimony

Dear Members of the Vermont House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife,

First of all, I want to thank you for listening to the concerns of Vermonters who have, for too long, remained voiceless on the topic of coyotes. I do hope our word and testimonies, including the facts presented by biologists, citizens, and local business owners will be taken to heart and respect your decisions going forward either way. To bring this issue to the table is no small victory, in my mind.

Ironically enough after the meeting last night, a deer had been hit on I-89 N, just a few miles from Memorial Dr. The deer was creating a road hazard while the out-of-commission and crumpled truck was being loaded onto the tow truck. I have hit a deer myself, and it is a rational fear of mine as statistically, according to State Farm®, in 2016 there was a 1 in 175 chance of hitting one in the state of Vermont¹. Couple that with the fact that between the years 2002-2007 (which are the latest years I can find), there were 7 fatal hunter incidents/accidents², and I find it absolutely absurd that we are giving so much credit to the coyote as a most feared and dangerous animal in the woods. I have seen coyotes on walks. I have heard them outside my window at night, yipping and yowling as they went on their way. I understand that they are not harmless, but the people that talk about how dangerous they are, are the ones who call them in closer or leave carcasses out (gut piles or deceased livestock) to attract them. It has already been stated that food source is the number one cause of coyote habituation, not a year-round killing, so I will not delve into that any further.



Coyote or 100% AKC registered German shepherd?

I am not only a coyote advocate, but I am a pet lover, much like nearly every other Vermonter, I have to assume. My dog goes anywhere with me possible, even though (or maybe because) we experience the same social anxieties in this hectic world that often does not make any sense. Did you scan the picture above, thinking it was a coyote? That is my dog, a 100% AKC registered German shepherd. Like most of her breed, she is my shadow, with excellent recall and obedience. However, I am under no delusion that she is a machine and know that she has the choice to leave my side any time she is not otherwise contained or leashed. For that reason, I fear taking her to any designated off-leash areas. During *any* time of the year, she could very, VERY easily be mistaken for a coyote. She has her orange garb, but that can be easily fall off if she is zooming through the brush. I have been warned by more people than I can count that I need to keep a special eye on her due to the coyote hunters. With so many so eager to “kill them all”, some even going so far as to mistake a moose for a coyote, she would not stand a chance. I would love a break where I can let her go, in designated areas, and know that should she venture off, she would not end up in a rotting pile with her wild cousins.

The coyote is the only animal in Vermont that is purposefully targeted by some hunters during the season it raises its young in hopes to deal the largest blow possible to the population. Without both the male and the female available to care for the pups, they will inevitably die, as both share equal burden in making sure the pups make it through those first few weeks, the female staying in the den with them as the male collects food for his mate and offspring³. This is done due to a misinformed idea that the deer numbers are suffering from coyote attacks on fawns and is an attempt to boost the already robust deer herd population. I will not go into detail on this because all the biologists and Louis Porter state that coyotes do not negatively affect the deer population over the long term. Just because a population of animals *can* be abused does not mean it *should* be abused. No one believes the coyote will go extinct due to hunting pressure. The problem is inviting an open season without bag limits or an increasing interest in contest killing creates the illusion that the coyote is expendable. I have seen countless comments stating if there was a problem with killing *en masse*, dumping bodies to rot, and killing coyotes with dependent young, that it would be illegal. A season on the coyote will be a compromise for all Vermonters. Coyote hunters will still be able to hunt and farmers will still be able to protect their livestock. I think it is time to give the coyote the same respect we have given other game species and begin a closed season which allows the coyote to raise and teach its young to survive in a way that does not conflict with humans, ensure that coyotes killed will be usable for fur-not left as wanton waste, and to allow some of us a break from the endless concern that our loved ones, human and dog, will be just another hunting incident.

1. "LOOK OUT! Deer Damage can be Costly!" *2016 deer collision data*, newsroom.statefarm.com/state-farm-releases-2016-deer-collision-data/.
2. "Products Teaching Resources Student Resources Commemorative Items." *International Hunter Education Association*, www.ihea-usa.org/news-and-events/news/147-incident-reports-2002-to-2007.
3. Bogan, D. A. 2014. "Rise of the Eastern Coyote." *New York State Conservationist*. 68(6): 20–23 and *New York State Department of Environmental Conservation*.