



February 14, 2017

To the House Committee on Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources:

I am writing to you on behalf of Green Mountain Animal Defenders—Vermont’s oldest and largest, volunteer-run, animal-protection organization—and our 3,000-plus dedicated supporters statewide.

First, I thank Chairman Deen for sponsoring H.60, an act relating to the hunting of coyotes. As Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter stated during a Vermont Public Radio (VPR) interview on February 13, 2017, coyotes have been in Vermont since the 1940s. The unregulated, year-round, open hunting season spanning 70 years indicates that the time has come for there to be a comprehensive assessment of the absence of regulations for coyote hunting, and we believe this bill is an important and necessary step in that process.

As Vermont wildlife advocates, our members oppose the widespread waste of coyotes who are not being used as food and seem to be killed for the fun, thrill, or simply for something to do, as seen on many social-media pages.

Predation of livestock has been blamed on coyotes as a way to justify unregulated coyote hunting and even coyote-killing contests. There are many efficient long-term solutions to protect livestock, including the use of guarding animals, such as dogs, donkeys, llamas, and others to deter coyotes. Various types of fencing, cultural methods, habitat modification, and other deterrents (such as sirens and strobe lights) are also reliable and readily available. An added benefit to some of these methods and devices is that they may provide long-term or even permanent solutions by causing coyotes to become more wary of being near farms and livestock.

Although there would be some cost for these options, it is the responsibility of those raising livestock to implement effective solutions, just as they would be responsible to protect their animals from severe weather and diseases.

The Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management’s website (by Cornell University, Clemson University, University of Nebraska, and Utah State University) states that, regardless of the means used to stop damage, the focus should be on damage prevention and control rather than elimination of coyotes.

I respectfully ask you to move H. 60 forward to facilitate the gathering of crucial information to fairly evaluate if coyotes should be eligible for protection.

What we do already know is that, as scavengers, coyotes act as “nature’s clean-up crew” by taking on the task of keeping the environment more clear of many decomposing animals. By their predation on the weaker and smaller game, they keep rapidly producing species in check. By taking the sick or weaker members of the larger species, like deer, the coyote encourages a healthier herd. By limiting the number of mice who may be hosting Lyme disease infected ticks, they help all Vermonters.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sharon MacNair*, president

*Working to Protect the Well-Being of All Animals Since 1983*

