

February 1, 2022

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Michael Blackwell, DVM, MPH  
*Knoxville, TN*

Gary Block, DVM, MS, DACVIM  
*East Greenwich, RI*

Barry Kellogg, VMD  
*North Port, FL*

Barry Kipperman, DVM,  
DACVIM, MSc  
*San Ramon, CA*

Paula Kislak, DVM  
*Santa Barbara, CA*

Nicole Paquette, JD  
*Washington, DC*

Gwendy Reyes-Illg, DVM  
*Milwaukee, OR*

Meredith Rives, DVM  
*Evanston, IL*

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

Holly Cheever, DVM  
*Voorheesville, NY*

Nicholas Dodman, BVMS,  
DACVB, DACVAA  
*Grafton, MA*

Anne Fawcett, BVSc,  
MVetStud GradCertEd,  
MANZCVS, DipECAWBW  
*NSW, Australia*

Brenda Forsythe, MD, PhD,  
DVM, CAAB  
*Guadalupe, CA*

Zarah Hedge, DVM, MPH,  
DACVPM, DABVP  
*San Diego, CA*

Joann Lindenmayer, DVM, MPH  
*North Grafton, MA*

Sheila (D'Arpino) Segurson,  
DVM, DACVB  
*Pleasanton, CA*

Erin Spencer, M.Ed.,  
CVT, VTS (ECC)  
*Derry, NH*

**Re: VETERINARY SUPPORT for legislation to prohibit coyote and furbearer killing contests**

Dear Chair Ware and House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee members:

I am writing on behalf of the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) in support of legislation to prohibit coyote and furbearer killing contests in Virginia. This is an issue of such great importance to animal care professionals, wildlife rehabilitators, and concerned citizens across the Commonwealth.

HSVMA is a nationwide association of approximately 9,000 veterinary professionals—including approximately 225 Virginia members—with a focus on the health and welfare of all animals, including free-roaming wildlife.

Veterinarians stand among the staunchest defenders of animal health and well-being. We work daily to minimize the pain and suffering that animals experience. One way we do that is by supporting policies that minimize the cruelty intentionally inflicted upon animals by humans. And it is hard to imagine a more callous disregard for animal suffering than that displayed in wildlife killing contests, in which participants vie for cash and prizes for killing the most, the heaviest, or sometimes even the smallest animals within a specified time period.

I was horrified to see footage of undercover investigations by the Humane Society of the United States of killing contests in Virginia in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The footage shows participants bringing in hundreds of dead coyotes and piling them up for counting or weighing, while children play among the bodies. Some of the animals have gruesome injuries and are ripped apart by bullets.

Indiscriminately killing large numbers of coyotes for prizes is fundamentally inhumane. The random and indiscriminate killing of coyotes in springtime contests can cause the orphaning of dependent pups, who are left to succumb to exposure, predation, or a slow and excruciating death by starvation. As veterinary medical professionals, we can attest that the agony endured by coyotes from this type of death is no different than that experienced by our own dogs.

Additionally, in online forums, social media posts, and videos, participants have been known to gloat about "gut shot" animals, particularly when referring to coyotes. "Gut shots" are evidence of poor shot placement likely resulting from the incentives in wildlife killing contests to kill as many animals as possible in a specific time



period. Before succumbing to these gruesome injuries, “gut shot” animals must endure unimaginable suffering, all for nothing more than the contest participant’s chance at a cash prize.

Wildlife killing contests are cruel, wasteful, unsporting, and do not reflect the values of most Virginians. Nor do they comport with the Commonwealth’s ethical hunting principles of sportsmanship, fair chase, and respect for wildlife.

The HSVMA therefore asks you to prohibit coyote and furbearer killing contests in Virginia. Thank you for your time and consideration of this vital humane issue.

Sincerely,

Josette Phillips Richmond, MS, DVM  
HSVMA Virginia State Representative