



HB 1247: End wildlife killing contests in Virginia

Cruel, pointless and unsporting

Wildlife killing contests are organized events in which participants compete for prizes—typically cash or guns—for killing the most or the largest animals within a certain time period. Countless animals, including bobcats, coyotes, and foxes, are targeted in these events every year in Virginia. The events take place across the state. Contests in 2022 and 2021 include the “Predator Showdown” in Callands, the “Kanawha Valley Predator Calling Championship” in Dugspur, “Dance’s Sporting Goods Predator Hunt” in Colonial Heights, and the “Eastern U.S. Predator Calling Championship,” the killing contest with the largest U.S. attendance east of the Mississippi River, which holds its weigh-in in Wytheville.

Killing sprees

These competitive killing events are a bloodbath for entertainment purposes, with participants glorifying kill numbers and showing no respect for wild animals and their habitats. Competitors often use high-tech electronic calling devices to lure animals in for an easy kill, and then gun them down with high-powered rifles—including AR-15s—fitted with night vision thermal imaging scopes. Participants often dump the bodies of the animals after the prizes are awarded. Animals may be injured or dependent young may be orphaned during these events, left to die from starvation, predation, or exposure.

“[There is a] misconception that predator killing contests provide benefits to the public and other wildlife species.”

— Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

Virginia killing contests exposed

At wildlife killing contests in Dugspur in 2021 and Lovington in 2020, Humane Society of the United States undercover investigators documented dead animals piled into trucks bearing stickers and license plates reading, “Coyote Hearse,” “Coyote Taxi,” and “Yote H8R,” animals strewn about on the ground, competitors dragging animals to scales to be weighed, and children watching as participants hung bloody animals on scales. At the 2021 contest, a team of participants congratulated each other as they wore matching “Nightlife Assassins” sweatshirts. Between the two events, over 300 animals were killed.

Counterproductive to sound wildlife management

Wildlife killing contests serve no legitimate wildlife management function. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources has found, “no scientific evidence to support claims that predator hunting contests reduce predator numbers, reduce livestock damage, or increase populations of game species (possible exception on heavily hunted individual farms).” In fact, the best available science demonstrates that indiscriminate killing of carnivores like coyotes can increase their numbers and increase conflicts with livestock.

All species—especially top carnivores—play a vital role in healthy ecosystems. Coyotes, for example, help to control disease transmission, keeping rodent populations in check, increasing biodiversity, removing sick animals from the gene pool and protecting crops.



Kanawha Valley Predator Calling Championship (Jan. 2021)

Not supported by the public

During the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resource’s recent public comment period about wildlife killing contests, 78% of Virginia respondents were in favor of a rule to ban them. Allowing this bloodsport to continue reflects poorly on Virginia’s sportsmen and sportswomen. The Virginia DWR and wildlife agency professionals in Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Vermont and Washington—all states that have outlawed contests—have recognized that these events are a stain on the hunting community and jeopardize the future of hunting.

Eight states, including Maryland, have banned killing contests. Please end this cruel, unsporting, and counterproductive bloodsport in Virginia.

Support HB 725 and SB 492/HB 1176

Protect pets and wildlife from cruel traps

HB 725 would prohibit the use of steel-jawed traps

SB 492/HB 1176 would prohibit the use of snare traps



Coyote in a leghold trap.



Raptor (likely a golden eagle) in a leghold trap.



A puppy's neck wound from a snare trap, shown after one week of healing.

Body-gripping traps are inhumane

Steel-jaw leghold traps, also called foothold traps, are powered by strong springs that slam shut on an animal and exert excruciating force. Animals caught in steel-jawed traps suffer from torn flesh, cut tendons and ligaments, and broken bones, and can further injure themselves, break teeth and dislocate joints in their struggle to escape.

Snares, or cable restraints, use a wire or cable loop that tightens around an animal and causes extreme suffering, asphyxia, and even death. Snares are designed to kill through strangulation, but the animal can suffer for hours or even days if the snare is incorrectly deployed or irregularly checked.

Trapping is an egregious practice

- The vast majority of trapped animals are not killed for food, but rather fuel the global fur trade.
- In addition to the injuries caused by the trap itself, animals can languish and die slowly from shock, dehydration, blood loss, starvation, predation, or exposure to the elements.
- Raccoons, coyotes, beavers, and foxes are among the most common, intentionally trapped species.

Traps also capture pets and protected species

Traps often capture non-target animals, such as family pets, raptors, threatened and endangered species, or mother animals with their young. Generally, trappers are not required to report their non-target captures, making it impossible to know how many non-target animals are caught or killed in traps each year.

Trapping is not justified by science

Trapping is not an effective method for “managing” wildlife populations and does not help control the spread of diseases. Trapping to control “nuisance” wildlife is unnecessary and cruel. Wildlife conflicts can be resolved by removing attractants and by wildlife-proofing places where we don’t want them to be.