



**HUMANE SOCIETY
WILDLIFE LAND TRUST**

February 1, 2022

Re: SUPPORT for HB 1247, legislation to prohibit wildlife killing contests in Virginia

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

On behalf of our Virginia members and supporters, the Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust requests your support for HB 1247 to prohibit coyote and furbearer killing contests in Virginia.

The Trust has 117 sanctuaries across the U.S. and Canada, including two in Virginia, that span over 21,085 acres. We work to permanently preserve and connect habitat, protecting the homes of all species of wildlife. And each of those species, including carnivores such as foxes and coyotes, play their own, uniquely important role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. In particular, coyotes provide trophic cascade benefits such as indirectly protecting ground-nesting birds from smaller carnivores and increasing the biological diversity of plant and wildlife communities.¹ By keeping rodent populations in check, foxes—a target of some killing contests in Virginia—also help to protect crops and control tick-borne diseases such as Lyme.

In addition to our work to protect wildlife habitat, we strive to create a world in which wild animals are respected for their intrinsic value and humane solutions are sought to human-wildlife conflicts. Scientific studies have amply demonstrated that the random killing of coyotes, such as in these killing contests, is not an effective method of mitigating potential conflicts with livestock, pets, and humans. In fact, it can increase problems. By disrupting the stable and limiting breeding structure of coyote packs, more reproduction will occur—resulting in more coyotes than there were to begin with. USDA studies have also found that the random killing of non-predating coyotes, who were living in proximity to livestock herds and not causing problems, can trigger conflicts where there were none previously.² Nonlethal livestock protection methods, including the use of fencing, fladry, guard animals, and birthing sheds, have proven very effective in preventing conflicts with wild carnivore species.³

With all of this in mind, the Virginia members and supporters of the Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust ask that you pass HB 1247 to prohibit coyote and furbearer killing contests. Thank you.

Cary Smith
Program Specialist

¹ S. E. Henke and F. C. Bryant, "Effects of Coyote Removal on the Faunal Community in Western Texas," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 63, no. 4 (1999); K. R. Crooks and M. E. Soule, "Mesopredator Release and Avifaunal Extinctions in a Fragmented System," *Nature* 400, no. 6744 (1999); E. T. Mezquida, S. J. Slater, and C. W. Benkman, "Sage-Grouse and Indirect Interactions: Potential Implications of Coyote Control on Sage-Grouse Populations," *Condor* 108, no. 4 (2006); N. M. Waser et al., "Coyotes, Deer, and Wildflowers: Diverse Evidence Points to a Trophic Cascade," *Naturwissenschaften* 101, no. 5 (2014).

² Randy Comeleo, "Using Coyotes to Protect Livestock. Wait. What?" *Oregon Small Farm News*, Vol. XIII No. 2.

³ Adrian Treves et al., "Forecasting Environmental Hazards and the Application of Risk Maps to Predator Attacks on Livestock," *BioScience* 61, no. 6 (2011); Philip J. Baker et al., "Terrestrial Carnivores and Human Food Production: Impact and Management," *Mammal Review* 38, (2008); A. Treves and K. U. Karanth, "Human-Carnivore Conflict and Perspectives on Carnivore Management Worldwide," *Conservation Biology* 17, no. 6 (2003); J. A. Shivik, A. Treves, and P. Callahan, "Nonlethal Techniques for Managing Predation: Primary and Secondary Repellents," *Conservation Biology* 17, no. 6 (2003); N. J. Lance et al., "Biological, Technical, and Social Aspects of Applying Electrified Fladry for Livestock Protection from Wolves (*Canis Lupus*)," *Wildlife Research* 37, no. 8 (2010); Andrea Morehouse and Mark Boyce, "From Venison to Beef: Seasonal Changes in Wolf Diet Composition in a Livestock Grazing Environment," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 9, no. 8 (2011); and Fox, C.H. and C.M. Papouchis. 2005. Coyotes in Our Midst: Coexisting with an Adaptable and Resilient Carnivore. Animal Protection Institute, Sacramento, California.