

A guide to passing local resolutions condemning wildlife killing contests



Charles Wood

Advocates across the country are working with their city or county councils, commissions, or boards to pass resolutions that condemn wildlife killing contests and call on state policymakers—the state legislature or state wildlife management agency—to ban these cruel events. These resolutions are non-binding, meaning that they are simply a position statement or opinion from the city or county government. And while they are not laws and thus cannot actually ban killing contests, resolutions are a great way to show public support for an issue and can serve as the building blocks for a statewide ban. As of September 2020, city and county governments in Arizona, Minnesota, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin have passed these resolutions.

You can help pass a resolution in your community—you might be surprised, sometimes it takes just a few short weeks! Once you've reviewed this guide, please email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org. We want to help. We'll let you know what efforts are already underway in your state and provide support as you move through the resolution process. We may also be able to attend meetings or calls with your local officials to serve as issue experts.

Identify the local governmental body you want to approach

First, find out details on your community's local governmental body. The names of these bodies vary by state, but they are often called the town, city, or county council, commission, or board. You might also ask the mayor to issue a proclamation, which is similar to a resolution. The resolution process varies around the country, so take the time to become familiar with how things work in your city or county. An official or employee in your local government may be able to help you. Consider attending a meeting of the governing body you hope to influence.

Find a friend in office

Public officials tend to take constituents' interests seriously, so try talking to your own councilmember, county commissioner or alderman first. As much as we would like the people we vote for to agree with us on animal protection issues, however, this may not always be the case. If your own local government official is not interested, try to find another official with an interest in animal issues and pitch your idea to him or her. We may be able to point you toward a sympathetic decisionmaker—email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org or [contact your HSUS state director](#).

Prepare your materials

Before reaching out to your local officials, prepare a concise factsheet (one to two pages) about wildlife killing contests in your state. The factsheet should explain the problem and why a resolution is needed. You will also

Email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org for more information.

want to provide a sample resolution so that your councilmember can get an idea of what the resolution will look like. This guide contains a sample factsheet (which you should tailor for your state) as well as a sample resolution you can share with your councilmember.

Craft your introductory email

Next, email the local government officials that you have identified as being potentially friendly on this issue, and ask if they'd be interested in working with you on a resolution. Include the factsheet and sample resolution, as described above, as well as a brief overview of the issue in the body of your email. Ask to set up a call or meeting to further discuss the issue. This guide contains a sample email for you to send.

Helpful tips for your meeting

Dress professionally and be cordial. Practice your presentation ahead of time. If you do not know the answer to a question, tell the official you will find out and get back to them. Do not be discouraged if the official agrees with only a portion of your proposal. Compromise is often necessary in legislative advocacy. Be candid about which entities will likely oppose the resolution. *Please also remember that even if wildlife killing contests are not held within your city limits, it is still an issue of great significance to the citizens of your city, county, and state.*

Promptly follow up on your meeting by sending an email thanking your elected official for her or his time, briefly re-stating your position, and responding to any unanswered questions that came up during the meeting. For more tips on meeting with elected officials, please go [here](#).

Develop a proposed resolution

If your local government official is interested in working with you, you will now need a proposed resolution to present to the city or county government. This guide includes a sample resolution for you to adapt. When drafting your resolution, keep in mind the number and types of wildlife killing contests that happen in your state (and especially in your city or county), what species of animals are commonly targeted by the contests, and what other outdoor activities your state residents normally enjoy. You may also wish to highlight the importance of native carnivore species like coyotes and foxes to your state's ecosystem, and the growing

During your meeting, be prepared to explain that:

- You are only seeking a *non-binding* resolution—not an ordinance or a law. Essentially, the resolution is simply a policy statement from the governmental body.
- The resolution does not oppose subsistence hunting; it is focused *only* on wildlife killing contests.
- Even if contests are not held within your city or county limits, it is still an issue of great significance to your community. All citizens of the state have a vested interest in the conservation and protection of all of the state's wildlife, regardless of where they live.
- There is growing public opposition to wildlife killing contests across our nation. As of September 2020, seven states—Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington—have banned them.
- Gratuitously slaughtering wildlife for cash and prizes is out of step with the way most Americans believe animals should be treated.
- Wildlife killing contests are counterproductive to sound wildlife management, and do not protect livestock or increase numbers of game species like deer or turkeys.
- All species—including often-misunderstood coyotes—are important to natural ecosystems, and the indiscriminate killing of certain species can create significant wildlife management problems.
- A growing number of hunters and wildlife management professionals are recognizing that these contests are damaging the reputation of hunters and jeopardizing the future of hunting in America.

popularity of wildlife watching among your state’s residents. We’re glad to help you draft a resolution and provide you with a listing of city and county resolutions on wildlife killing contests that have been passed across the U.S.—just email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org.

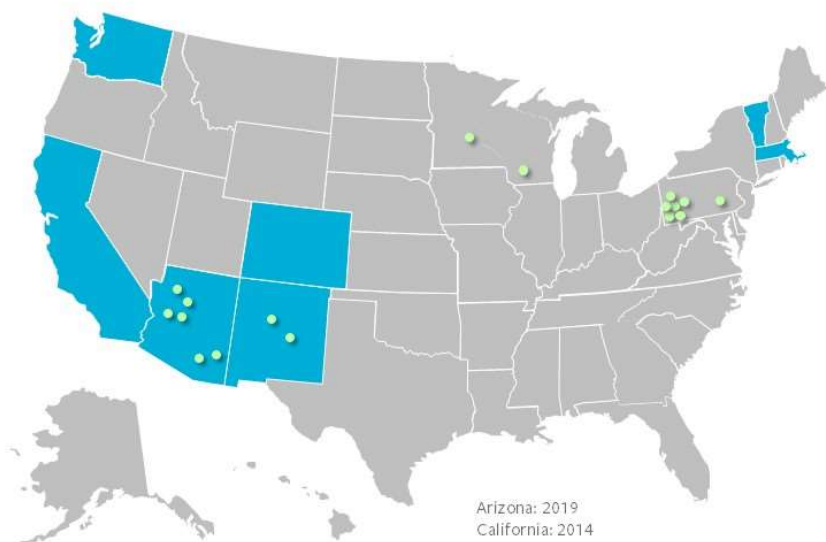
Take the lead of your councilmember

The process of passing resolutions varies by community. Your local officials will advise you on the process. Generally, the resolution will pass if a majority of the members of the governing body vote for it. Some governing bodies require a public hearing prior to the vote to gauge the public’s support (or lack thereof) for the resolution. If there’s a hearing, you’ll likely be given the opportunity to testify. Encourage others to testify in support of the resolution, too. Keep us in the loop as the resolution progresses—we may be able to provide support, including by helping to draft testimony, providing responses to common questions about this issue, and lining up key stakeholders to testify.

Once the resolution passes, please let us know and be sure to thank your local government!

Email your local officials to thank them for taking action on issues important to you and other constituents. You might also consider submitting a letter to the editor of your local newspaper to praise your local officials publicly—they’ll appreciate the gratitude and be excited to work with you on other animal protection issues in the future. We’ve included a sample letter for you to personalize. Please also email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org to let us know your resolution was a success—we’ll be sure to share the victory on social media and elsewhere for maximum impact!

Use the sample documents below to help you with your effort.



State bans and local resolutions on wildlife killing contests

-  Ban on wildlife killing contests
-  City or county council resolution condemning killing contests

Arizona: 2019
California: 2014
Colorado: 2020
Massachusetts: 2019
New Mexico: 2019
Vermont: 2018
Washington: 2020

Updated September 2020



Email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org for more information.

Sample documents

Please be sure to tailor these documents to your specific local government. Insert facts about wildlife killing contests occurring in your state and explain why the issue is important to you personally.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

Here is an example of a 2020 resolution passed by the St. Paul, Minnesota City Council opposing wildlife killing contests and urging state policymakers to ban the practice:

St. Paul City Council Opposing the indiscriminate killing of wildlife in the form of wildlife killing contests.

WHEREAS, hunting and fishing are valued as methods of food gathering, recreation, and wildlife management in St. Paul, Ramsey County, and the State of Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, contests, including the “1st Annual Coyote Hunt” in Oak Grove, the “West Metro Coyote Tournament” in Watertown, the “Annual Dogs Days of Winter Coyote Hunt” in Sacred Heart, the “Predator Hunt” in Madison, and the “Ortonville VFW Predator Hunt,” have offered prizes for the mass killing of foxes and coyotes for cash and prizes, and allow the calling and harassing of those species in order to shoot and kill them indiscriminately; and

WHEREAS, the purposes and goals of many wildlife killing contests are profit or prizes, and not personal consumption, protection of property, or the ethics of conservation; and

WHEREAS, wild carnivore species, including coyotes and foxes, are an integral part of Minnesota’s ecosystem and play a critical role in maintaining a healthy balance of plants and animals in the ecosystem by preying on species such as rabbits, mice and other rodents; and

WHEREAS, the indiscriminate killing of wild carnivore species, even when done legally, does not serve any legitimate wildlife management purpose and instead upsets the natural balance of Minnesota’s ecosystem, and violates the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and the Public Trust Doctrine; and

WHEREAS, wildlife killing contests encourage a wanton taking of life that is contrary to Minnesota’s hunting ethic of fair chase and respect for the hunted; and

WHEREAS, young children are at times encouraged to participate in wildlife killing contests, sending the dangerous message that the only objective of hunting is to randomly kill animals for cash, prizes, and bragging rights; and

WHEREAS, wildlife killing contests that encourage the indiscriminate killing of wildlife for cash or prizes are unacceptable because they glorify killing for its own sake and do not reflect Minnesota’s humane values; and

WHEREAS, killing contests that encourage the unlimited and indiscriminate killing of furbearer species for prizes differ from “trophy deer” or “big buck” competitions, because Minnesota deer are hunted only under strict regulations that dictate seasons, methods of take, and bag limits, and are then submitted for judging; and

WHEREAS, St. Paul residents and visitors use its public lands for hiking, dog walking, wildlife watching, seasonal game hunting (e.g., deer bowhunting at Crosby Farm Park and Battle Creek Regional Park), and other outdoor activities compatible with maintenance of a healthy ecosystem, and the activities of wildlife killing contests may pose a threat to their safety and well-being;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that St. Paul hereby opposes wildlife killing contests conducted in Minnesota and supports changes to Minnesota statute or regulations to ban any and all future killing contests that target furbearer and unprotected mammal species.

Email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org for more information.

SAMPLE FACTSHEET

Wildlife killing contests are cruel, unsporting, and counterproductive

Gratuitously slaughtering animals for thrills and prizes is unethical and out of step with our current understanding of ecosystems and the important role each species plays.

Wildlife killing contests are a problem in our community

Every year, wild animals are killed for prizes and entertainment in killing contests in our state. At the [LOCAL EVENT NAME] in [LOCATION], participants compete to kill [SPECIES] for the prospect of winning [PRIZE INFO]. The goal is to kill [AS MANY ANIMALS AS POSSIBLE / THE HEAVIEST ANIMAL / ETC]. [ADD INFO ABOUT ANY CRUEL PRACTICES USED DURING THE HUNT OR OTHER DETAILS.]

Wildlife killing contests are nothing more than a blood sport

These events are similar to dogfighting or cockfighting, which have been outlawed in every state. They glorify killing and send a dangerous message to our youth that killing is fun and that life is of little value. Wildlife killing contests are antithetical to hunting principles that dictate respect for wildlife and their environment.

Wildlife killing contests fail to address wildlife conflict issues and may increase problems

Participants in wildlife killing contests attempt to rationalize the bloodshed with baseless myths about “pest” species. But the best available science demonstrates that random and mass killing of vital native wildlife species will not prevent conflicts with livestock, nor will it increase numbers of deer or turkeys for hunters. It also fails to recognize the importance of all species in natural ecosystems. What’s more, wildlife killing contests can create wildlife management problems by disrupting the hierarchical order within wildlife family structures.

Wildlife killing contests are a blot on our state

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, far more tourism dollars are spent on wildlife watching and other ecotourism activities than on activities like wildlife killing contests. Those who value wildlife and respect nature abhor wildlife killing contests and may avoid locations that cater to that subculture.

Wildlife killing contests damage the reputation of hunters and threaten the future of hunting

These events glorify violence and flout sportsmanship ethics and outdoor traditions. The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation holds that animals should only be killed for legitimate, non-frivolous reasons, and that science should guide wildlife conservation decisions. But the indiscriminate killing of animals for nothing more than prizes and bragging rights is the very definition of frivolous killing. As the Arizona Game and Fish Commission has recognized, “public outrage with these events has the potential to threaten hunting as a legitimate wildlife management function.” Vermont Fish & Wildlife says, “Coyote hunting contests are not only ineffective at controlling coyote populations, but these kinds of competitive coyote hunts are raising concerns on the part of the public and could possibly jeopardize the future of hunting and affect access to private lands for all hunters.” And Dan Gibbs, hunter and executive director of Colorado Department of Natural Resources, stated, “Hunting is an important reverent tradition in Colorado and powerful management tool but I also think wildlife killing contests give sportsmen and sportswomen a bad name and damage our reputation.”

Growing momentum to ban wildlife killing contests

Wildlife management agencies and lawmakers in a number of states—including Arizona, California, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont and Washington—have banned killing contests in recent years. It’s time to close the history book on this blood sport. We must abolish wildlife killing contests in our state.

Email us at wildlife@humanesociety.org for more information.

SAMPLE INITIAL EMAIL TO THE COUNCIL

Subject: Request for resolution condemning wildlife killing contests

Dear X,

As a resident of [LOCATION], I respectfully ask you to pass a non-binding resolution condemning wildlife killing contests and calling on state policymakers to ban the events in [YOUR STATE]. During wildlife killing contests, participants compete to kill the most, the largest, or even the smallest of the target wildlife species for cash and prizes within a specified time period. Much like dogfighting and cockfighting, both of which are outlawed in every state, killing contests are a blood sport. These events occur in [LOCATIONS IN YOUR STATE] and target [SPECIES KILLED IN THE EVENTS IN YOUR STATE].

Wildlife killing contests are not hunting in any traditional sense of the practice, but simply an organized ‘recreational’ slaughter of native species that play key roles in our shared ecosystems. They do not serve any legitimate wildlife management function and are counterproductive to sound science. Hunters and wildlife management agencies everywhere are recognizing that these events damage the reputation of the hunting community and jeopardize the future of hunting. States across the country—including Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington—have prohibited these senseless, unsporting, and unscientific events.

Local governments across at least five states have passed non-binding resolutions or proclamations condemning wildlife killing contests in the last several years: In Dewey-Humboldt, Flagstaff, Pima, Tucson, and Coconino and Yavapai Counties in Arizona; Albuquerque, New Mexico; St. Paul, Minnesota; Dane County, Wisconsin; and Carlisle, Pittsburgh, Monnessen, Bellevue, Braddock, Sharpsburg, and Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania. The resolutions in Arizona and New Mexico played a significant role in the lead up to statewide bans, by sending a strong message to state policymakers that the public would no longer tolerate these barbaric events.

I’ve attached a factsheet and sample non-binding resolution for your consideration. I’d welcome the opportunity to speak with you further about this important issue. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

X

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Once your resolution passes, consider submitting a letter to the editor of your local newspaper—not only to express your gratitude to the council, but also to persuade *state* policymakers that they should ban wildlife killing contests. Lawmakers frequently read the opinion section to gauge the interest of their constituents on a variety of matters. The average letter to the editor is only about five or six sentences (250 words or less)—keep it short and direct. Some papers list their word count limit in the letters section. Don't forget to include an “ask” (the action you want readers to take after reading your letter—i.e., to contact the state wildlife agency and/or state legislators). [Here](#) are some tips on writing and submitting letters. If your letter is published, please email us to let us know!

Dear Editor:

Thank you to the [CITY/COUNTY COUNCIL] for approving a resolution opposing wildlife killing contests that are held in [LOCATIONS NEAR YOU] and across the state, and endorsing a ban on this cruel, wasteful, and unsporting practice in [STATE]!

Most people are shocked to learn that wildlife killing contests—a blood sport akin to dogfighting, in which participants compete to kill the most or the largest [SPECIES] for cash or prizes occur across our state. These contests target historically stigmatized species, like coyotes, because there are almost no laws protecting them, and participants often perpetuate baseless myths to justify the bloodshed. Wildlife killing contests are out of step with modern science and are counterproductive to sound wildlife management. The best available science shows that randomly killing species like coyotes will not prevent conflicts with livestock or pets, and may even increase them by disrupting the stable breeding structure of coyote families. Killing contests also won't result in more deer or turkeys for hunters. In fact, hunters and state wildlife management professionals across the nation are recognizing that these contests are damaging the reputation of responsible sportsmen and sportswomen and jeopardizing the future of hunting in America.

Wildlife killing contests are simply about killing for cash and prizes, which is unacceptable to most people in our state. [STATE] should join other states—including Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington—that have banned these gruesome events in recent years. Please ask the [STATE WILDLIFE AGENCY] and your state legislators to propose a regulation or bill to ban wildlife killing contests in [STATE].