

# COYOTE PETITION REPORT

## Petitions

Three petitions were received by the Natural Resources Commission in April of this year. They are as follows:

1. Prohibit fox and coyote running enclosures during the hunting and trapping seasons, including prohibiting a person to use a dog to hunt, injure, maul, pursue, track, harass, take, or kill coyotes or foxes within a confined area where the purpose is to train and/or run dogs.
2. Prohibit a person from being able to take (includes kill, injure, maul, pursue, track, hunt, harass, or disturb in any manner) coyotes and foxes by the use or aid of a dog.

## Background on Running/Training enclosures

The DNR does not currently authorize running enclosures through a special permit or authorization. However, by allowing trappers to live-trap coyotes and foxes during the trapping season and possess them during the remainder of the trapping season without a special permit, this activity is currently legal during the hunting and trapping season for that animal.

## Purpose of Running Enclosures

1. Provides a place for individuals to train dogs, particularly those that are young or inexperienced, to trail coyotes and foxes.
2. Provides access to private land for pursuing furbearers due to the reduced amount of land available to hunt furbearers.
3. Allows training to be conducted safely in a controlled environment and allows dogs to be retrieved from a chase at any time.
4. Allows for individuals, including the young and elderly, to participate in the chase and observe the furbearers and dogs.
5. Allows judging of individual dogs during a chase during organized competitions (field trials).

## Concerns about Running Enclosures

1. Fair Chase: Running enclosures do not always provide for fair chase. The DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife believes that regulated hunting, fishing and trapping are legitimate pursuits when conducted in fair chase. Fair chase requires the hunter to not have an unfair advantage.
2. Disease and Parasite Transmission: The incidence of various diseases and parasites between captive and wild animals is increased within enclosures and poses a significant threat to both to the health of the wild animal population and to humans.
  - A. Rabies: the raccoon strain of rabies was transferred to Mid-Atlantic States from a shipment of raccoons by private hunting clubs; coyote-variant canine rabies was transferred to a Florida pen from Texas.
  - B. Other diseases: canine distemper, canine heartworm, sarcoptic mange, parvovirus enteritis, leptospirosis, and infectious canine hepatitis can be

transmitted by coyotes and foxes.

- C. Parasites: raccoon roundworm, *Multiceps serialis*, *Sarcocystis cuniculi*, and *Baliscaris* can also be carried by coyotes and foxes.
3. Sources of Animals: The primary source for furbearers released into training pens are animals captured from the wild. Furthermore, the live-trapping of foxes and coyotes for sale to training pens is popular among trappers, especially since a live animal can be sold for much more money than a raw fur (hide), or other part of the animal. If the animals are not obtained from the wild or from commercial breeders within the state, they would have to be obtained from out-of-state, creating a potential disease threat.
  4. Illegal Activities: Regardless of the regulations in place governing the chasing of coyotes in enclosures, there will always be some illegal activities. In states where running/training enclosures are permitted, law enforcement operations have found illegal buying, selling and possessing of certain species of wild animals, in addition to cruelty to animals, in running/training enclosures.
  5. Privatization and commercialization of wild animals: By allowing running enclosures to obtain animals from the wild, these wild-caught animals are then held in captivity by private individuals and used for a commercial purpose, converting wild animals that are the property of the people of Indiana to private use. However, individuals who obtain coyotes legally are allowed by law to possess coyotes under a game breeder license or wild animal possession permit. License rehabilitators are also allowed to retain non-releasable coyotes that were obtained from the wild and possess them under a wild animal possession permit.
  6. Hunter ethics and public perception: The public perception of the DNR authorizing running enclosures, which has never been done, could damage the public's view of trappers and hunters. The Indiana DNR supports the concept of fair chase and has taken a stand against canned hunting of captive cervids and other species. Some organizations in Kentucky have opposed the live sale of foxes and coyotes because of the negative image it portrays of hunting and trapping and due to the potential for an increased number of traps in the field.
  7. Funding for enforcement: Federal funds under the Pittman-Robertson Act are ineligible for use for regulating and inspecting services or property of material value to individuals or groups for commercial purposes or to benefit such individuals or groups, and it is also not allowed for the stocking of game animals for the purpose of providing hunting without objectives for restoration or establishment of self-sustaining populations.

## **Other States**

*The lists below do not reflect every state in the nation, only those in the Midwest.*

Allow Training Pens: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Allow the Hunting Coyotes and Foxes with Dogs: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Kentucky: hunting is open year-round statewide and allows the use of dogs for coyotes; trapping coyotes is allowed only during the furbearer season; fox hunting can be done with dogs; coyotes cannot be imported except for zoos, educational or scientific institutions or

government agencies. Coyotes and foxes can be taken from the wild and kept under a captive wildlife permit; Allows foxhound training enclosures under a special permit. Coyote can be hunted year-round. Foxes can be chased year-round during daylight hours for sport and not to kill; raccoons and opossums can be chased year-round for sport and not to kill.

Wisconsin: allows running enclosures by permit only for foxes, coyotes, rabbits, raccoons, black bears, and bobcats

Missouri: allows running areas for foxes and coyotes; foxes and coyotes must be acquired from legal sources within Missouri

Illinois: has a year-round running season (cannot be killed) for coyotes, foxes, raccoons, opossums, and striped skunks; coyotes may be hunted on private property using dogs

Michigan: allows a person to train dogs on wild animals only from July 15 through April 15; Michigan residents can train dogs on fox on state lands in one zone under a special permit; does not allow live game or protected animals taken from the wild to be kept in captivity except under a permit issued by the DNR; it is illegal to bring a live raccoon or skunk into Michigan; coyotes can be taken on private property without a permit by a property owner or designee all year if they are doing or about to do damage on private property

Minnesota: a new law prohibits the export and import of a live coyote except under a permit from the commissioner

Ohio: Allows the hunting of coyotes, foxes, and other mammals and game birds on wild animal hunting preserves; the minimum preserve size is 80 acres; animal must be tagged but cannot escape into the wild; coyotes can be hunted year-round

## **Conclusion**

The DNR believes that dogs should continue to be allowed to hunt coyotes and foxes in Indiana. Dogs are an effective tool in finding and chasing coyotes and are allowed to be used to hunt coyotes in all of the Midwestern states. While it is not known how many hunters use dogs to hunt coyotes in Indiana, the DNR believes that hunters should continue to be able to hunt with the aid of dogs for both coyotes and foxes. Most dogs are used to assist in tracking and finding coyotes and foxes and are not always used to kill the animal. The coyote population in Indiana is not believed to be in decline. Coyotes continue to move into suburban and urban neighborhoods where they cause conflicts with humans. Hunters need to be able to continue to hunt with as many tools as possible, while still maintaining fair chase.

Running enclosures are already not allowed outside the coyote hunting and trapping season in Indiana. The only known facility with a running enclosure in Indiana does not have a fence that prohibits the escape of the coyotes. There is currently no evidence to show that any running enclosures exist in Indiana during the coyote hunting and trapping season that completely prevent coyotes and/or foxes from escaping dogs. Furthermore, it would be cost prohibitive to have a running enclosure that existed only during the coyote hunting and trapping season. Therefore, there is no apparent need for a rule of this type at this time.

The DNR believes that until all entities that are currently allowed to possess coyotes legally are governed the same, further restricting hunters and trappers who take a species of animal that can create problems for farmers and other landowners is inconsistent and inequitable. The DNR is in the process of making changes to the rule governing the rehabilitation of wild animals (including coyotes) and will be reviewing other rules that pertain to the importation, possession, and release of coyotes, foxes and raccoons within the next year. Therefore, the DNR is not recommending any rule changes governing coyotes and foxes at this time.