

NEWS

Massachusetts coyote hunt competitions cause controversy



'ETHICS ISSUE': Coyote hunting competitions in the state are under fire from animal rights activists, who want the events to be banned. FILE PHOTO

By **MARY MARKOS** | mary.markos@bostonherald.com | Boston Herald
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Animal rights advocates are calling on the state to ban coyote-hunting competitions, where hunters are rewarded for bagging the biggest beasts with cash prizes.



“This comes down to a values and an ethics issue,” Liz Wagner, an animal advocacy specialist at the MSPCA, told the Herald. “We think the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife should ban these contests because it’s the right thing to do. It sends a message that our state can tell the difference between responsible use and wildlife management and senseless killing.”

The coyote contests are held annually in Granby and Hyannis, according to Wagner. Coyote hunting is allowed in Massachusetts during coyote hunting season, which is from October to March, and state law does not prohibit private entities offering prizes.

MassWildlife is holding a public listening session on coyote management, hunting, and hunting contests on Thursday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Cape Cod Community College. It decided to hold this meeting along with another in June to listen to input and concerns from the public, according to spokeswoman Katie Gronendyke.

After hearing the public concerns, MassWildlife will determine what, if any, regulatory changes to recommend to the board, according to Gronendyke. If the board endorses a regulatory change, a formal public hearing and public comment period would be scheduled at a later date.

The hunt is purely for sport, according to Wagner, and not to address any sort of overpopulation of the “self-regulating” species. The contests also do not help reduce any conflicts between coyotes and people or their pets, Wagner said, adding that the notion is “not supported by any sound scientific evidence whatsoever.”

“We oppose these coyote-killing contests because we view them as essentially blood sports,” Magner said. “They violate widely embraced principles and ethics that guide hunting associations across the country and state wildlife agencies across the country.”

Powderhorn Outfitters in Hyannis, which Magner said has hosted two contests, did not return requests for comment yesterday. The Fairview Sportsmen’s Club in Granby hosts an annual coyote hunt, its president, Tom Anderson, confirmed.

“We do a charity event to raise money for Shriners Hospital and the USO,” Anderson said, “It does have a relation to a coyote hunt. Anything more than that I wouldn’t be comfortable answering over the phone.”

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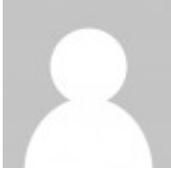
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Mary Markos covers Massachusetts politics and state government. She worked as a reporter for the Salem News, the Gloucester Daily Times and the Jewish Journal before coming to the Herald in May. Mary is a Massachusetts native and graduated from the University of New Hampshire.

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