



Overview

As the benefits of carnivores to ecosystem health are becoming recognized by scientists, the methods of killing carnivores are coming under scrutiny. Awareness of wildlife killing contests in particular has reached the public consciousness and energized citizens and governments to act.

New Mexico and Vermont passed bills (in 2019 and 2018, respectively) banning coyote killing contests. California enacted a similar ban on contests for furbearing and nongame animals via agency regulation in 2014; Arizona did so in 2019. In 2019 seven states introduced legislation to ban various contests. Some legislative options are found below.

Legislation



Bans on Killing Contests for Certain Species

Some states seek to prohibit contests for killing species that are frequently targeted in these events. New Mexico ([SB 76](#)) and Vermont ([10 V.S.A. § 4716](#)) banned coyote killing contests. In 2019, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission adopted a [rule](#) to prohibit killing contests for predatory and furbearing species. California regulations ([14 CCR § 465\(b\)](#); [14 CCR § 472\(e\)](#)) ban awarding of prizes for fur-bearing and nongame animals (coyotes, bobcats, foxes, and raccoons).



Categorical Bans on Wildlife Killing Contests

Some state bills would make it unlawful to organize, sponsor, promote, conduct or participate in any contest with the objective of taking wildlife for prizes or other inducement, or for killing targeted species for “fun” and “entertainment.” Examples of bills include New York ([S.4253A](#)), New Jersey ([A.5224/S.3541](#)) and Wisconsin ([AB 29/SB 30](#)). The bills exempt fishing contests.



Limits on Killing Unprotected Species

Some species—typically carnivores considered to be “pests” or “varmints,” including bobcats, coyotes, and foxes—receive few or no protections under the law. One option is to place restrictions on hunting of these species to include implementation of bag limits, seasons, hunting methods, and/or hunting hours. An example is California: [AB 273](#) Prohibit recreational and commercial fur trapping of nongame and furbearing species; [AB 1254](#) Prohibit recreational hunting and trapping of bobcats (2019)



Bans on Inhumane Killing Methods

Another option is to ban certain inhumane practices such as running over animals with snowmobiles or ATVs, penning and/or poisoning. Examples of 2019 bills include Montana ([SB 187](#): Prohibit vehicular injury of predatory animals) and Wyoming ([HB 288](#): Prohibit wantonly killing or injuring animal with snowmobile). Other examples include Virginia ([SB 42](#): Phase out penning of foxes and coyotes to train hunting dogs) and Montana ([HB 287](#): Require traps to be checked daily).



Resolutions Calling on the State Wildlife Management Agency to Adopt Regulations

If legislation is not viable, another option is for the state legislature to pass a resolution or memorial calling on the state wildlife agency to ban killing contests or inhumane killing through regulation. Cities and counties have passed similar resolutions in recent years (examples include [Albuquerque, NM](#); [Dewey-Humboldt, AZ](#); and [Madison, WI](#)).