



Sample Letter to the Editor

[Date]

To the Editor:

Sponsors have given a misleading name to the coyote “calling” contest on **[day and date]** in **[town]**. The event is actually a killing contest, in which contestants compete for prize money to see who can kill the most coyotes in a specified period of time. The **[town council, county commissioners, or sponsor]** should put an end to this blot on our community without delay.

Hunting advocates—such as retired Montana wildlife biologist Jim Posewitz, author of *Beyond Fair Chase*—agree that killing for prizes violates the hunter’s fair chase code and is therefore unsporting. Furthermore, despite claims to the contrary, killing contests do not reduce the coyote population and do not protect livestock or wildlife from depredation. Humane methods to protect livestock—including sound husbandry practices and the use of strobe lights and bells—have proven effective, however.

We are a modern, hardworking ranching community looking to attract business and tourists. Newspaper pictures of stacks of bloody carcasses send the wrong message to the rest of the country.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Local group]

Stop Wildlife Killing Contests



[Local Group] Urges Cancellation of Coyote Calling Contest

The **[local group]** has called upon the **[town council, county commissioners, or sponsors]** of **[town or city, state]** to cancel a coyote calling contest scheduled for **[day and date]**.

A “calling” contest is a killing contest in which participants compete for prize money to see who can kill the most coyotes in a specified period of time. The contests got their name from the practice of attracting coyotes into rifle range with a call that imitates the cry of a coyote in distress or a downed animal. Coyotes, like humans, feel a strong bond to other members of their species, and when they hear this cry for help, they come to investigate.

In a letter to **[letter recipient]** dated **[date]**, **[name and title]** of the **[local group]** said, “Manipulating animals’ natural compassion to lure them into gun range is not hunting but a reprehensible practice condemned by hunters and nonhunters alike.”

The letter explained why the **[local group]** believes the contest should be canceled:

“First, killing living creatures for prizes is unethical. Declaring a ‘winner’ for killing animals embodies the type of recreational hunting that the general public finds morally reprehensible. Hunting advocates, such as retired Montana wildlife biologist Jim Posewitz, agree that killing for prizes violates the hunter’s ethical code. In his book *Beyond Fair Chase*, Posewitz defines ethical hunting as ‘the fair chase pursuit of free-roaming wildlife in a noncompetitive situation.’ Founder and president of Orion: The Hunter’s Institute, Posewitz is not an animal rights advocate but a lifelong hunter who has devoted himself to promoting and preserving the hunting tradition. His condemnation of contest killing should give everyone pause.

“...Second, despite claims to the contrary, killing contests do not reduce the coyote population or protect livestock or wildlife from depredation. Even if large numbers of predators are removed from an area, scientific evidence demonstrates that predator

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Sample Press Release (cont.)

species such as coyotes and foxes respond with an increase in numbers—the population may even come to outnumber that in the area before the killing.

“Third, there are effective ways to protect livestock from coyotes that don’t involve senseless killing, such as sound husbandry practices, aversion methods including strobe lights and bells, and—primarily for sheep—guard animals, including dogs, llamas, and donkeys.”

The letter ends with the following plea: “We have all worked hard to create a modern, civilized ranching community, proud of our traditions and enthusiastic about our future. We are not yokels or barbarians, and it is time that we stopped demonstrating to the rest of the country that we are.”



Coyote Contest Kills Celebrate Animal Cruelty

Sponsors have given a misleading name to a coyote “calling” contest on **[date]** in **[town]**. The event is actually a killing contest, in which contestants compete for prize money to see who can kill the most coyotes in a specified period of time. The **[city council, county commissioners, sponsors]** should put an end to this blot on our community for several reasons.

First, killing living creatures for prizes is unethical. Declaring a “winner” for killing animals embodies the type of recreational killing that the general public finds morally reprehensible. Hunting advocates, such as retired Montana wildlife biologist Jim Posewitz, agree that killing for prizes violates the hunter’s ethical code. In his book *Beyond Fair Chase*, Posewitz defines ethical hunting as “the fair chase pursuit of free-roaming wildlife in a noncompetitive situation.” Founder and president of Orion: The Hunter’s Institute, Posewitz is not an animal rights advocate but a lifelong hunter devoted to promoting and preserving the hunting tradition. His condemnation of contest killing should give everyone pause.

The calling contests are named such because many contest participants attract the coyotes into rifle range by using a mechanical or electronic call that imitates the cry of a coyote in distress or a downed animal. Coyotes, like humans, feel a strong bond to other members of their species, and when they hear this cry for help, they come to investigate. Preying on animals’ natural compassion or instinct to lure them into gun range is not hunting but a reprehensible practice condemned by hunters and nonhunters alike as unsporting.

Second, despite claims to the contrary, killing contests do not reduce the coyote population and do not protect livestock or wildlife from depredation. Even if large numbers of predators are removed from an area, scientific evidence demonstrates that predators such as coyotes and foxes respond with an increase in numbers—the population may even grow to outnumber that in the area before the killing.



Third, there are effective ways to protect livestock from coyotes that don't involve senseless killing, such as sound husbandry practices, aversion strategies including the use of strobe lights and bells, and—primarily for sheep—guard animals, including dogs, llamas, and donkeys. These measures may be a bit more expensive than killing contests, but livestock protection requires investing in measures that actually work. Killing contests may be cheap for the county, but they are expensive for the ranchers whose livestock get no protection from them.

And that brings us to the final point—the coyote calling contest is a blot on **[town's]** reputation. At a time when we are trying to attract businesses and tourists to our community, the contest makes us seem backward at best. As a forward-looking community working hard to prosper in difficult economic times, we should be wary that we are promoting this image. We have all worked hard to create a modern, civilized ranching community, proud of our traditions and enthusiastic about our future. We are not yokels or barbarians, and it is time that we stopped demonstrating to the rest of the country that we are.

[Name, mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail]



[Date]

Dear **[Sponsor]**,

We are writing to urge you to cancel the coyote “calling” contest scheduled for **[date]**. Despite its innocuous sounding name, this “contest” is simply a bloodbath for entertainment, with contestants competing for prize money to see who can slaughter the most coyotes in a specified period of time. We believe that you should put an end to this blot on our community for several reasons.

First, killing living creatures for prizes is unethical. Declaring a “winner” for killing animals embodies the type of recreational killing that the general public finds morally reprehensible. Hunting advocates, such as retired Montana wildlife biologist Jim Posewitz, agree that killing for prizes violates the hunter’s fair chase code. In his book *Beyond Fair Chase*, Posewitz defines ethical hunting as “the fair chase pursuit of free-roaming wildlife in a noncompetitive situation.” As founder and president of Orion: The Hunter’s Institute, Posewitz is not an animal rights advocate but a lifelong hunter who has devoted himself to promoting and preserving the hunting tradition. His condemnation of contest killing should give everyone pause.

Many contest participants attract the coyotes into rifle range by using a call that imitates the cry of a coyote in distress or a downed animal. Coyotes, like humans, feel a strong bond to other members of their species, and when they hear this cry for help, they throw their normal caution aside and come to investigate. This practice, in fact, is what gave these contests their name. Manipulating animals’ natural compassion or instinct to lure them into gun range is not hunting but a reprehensible practice condemned by hunters and nonhunters alike.

Second, despite claims to the contrary, killing contests do not reduce the coyote population or protect livestock or wildlife from depredation. Even if large numbers of predators are removed from an area, scientific evidence demonstrates that predator



species such as coyotes and foxes respond through an increase in numbers—the population may even grow to outnumber that in the area before the killing.

Third, there are effective ways to protect livestock from coyotes that don't involve senseless killing, such as sound husbandry practices, aversion methods including strobe lights and bells, and—primarily for sheep—guard animals, including dogs, llamas, and donkeys. These measures may be a bit more expensive than killing contests, but livestock protection requires investment in strategies that actually work. Killing contests may be cheap for the county, but they are expensive for the ranchers whose livestock get no protection from them.

And that brings us to the final point—the coyote calling contest is a blot on **[town's]** reputation. We have all worked hard to create a modern, civilized ranching community, proud of our traditions and enthusiastic about our future. We are not yokels or barbarians, and it is time that we stopped demonstrating to the rest of the country that we are.

In the interests of creating a more humane community and providing ranchers with real protection for their livestock, we urge you to cancel this cruel and useless event.

We thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

[Name]
[Title]
[Group]
[Contact Info]