



MassWildlife

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Wayne F. MacCallum, *Director*

January 6, 2009

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW) is responding to your letter regarding coyotes on behalf of the Governor's office. The MDFW is charged with the statutory responsibility to protect, restore, and manage the flora and fauna of Massachusetts. I would like to take this opportunity to address the issues brought up in your letter.

The MDFW is aware of the research conducted by Jonathon Way, as we issue permits for his research and receive reports outlining his research findings. The MDFW bases management decisions for all wildlife on sound, scientific, peer reviewed research. The MDFW fully understands coyote ecology, and uses hunting and trapping as a valuable management tool which also promotes the sustainable use of coyotes as a valuable natural resource.

In regards to Dr. Way's research, it is unnecessary to protect the collared animals in Dr. Way's study for a variety of reasons. First, it is just as important to understand how hunting pressure and mortality affect coyote ecology and population dynamics, as it is to understand the effects of vehicle or disease induced mortality. It would also be difficult to protect a few collared individuals in an area that can be used by a multitude of un-collared coyotes. Coyotes occupy home ranges that can range from less than 6 mi² to larger than 20mi² and can travel very large distances in a short period of time, thus the range of 1 collared animal could span multiple towns. Distinguishing collared coyotes from un-collared coyotes would also be very difficult as the collars can often be inconspicuous and covered by fur, especially during the winter months when coyotes have a thick winter coat.

Dr. Way's request for a permit to study captive coyotes at his home was denied for a variety of reasons. The MDFW informed Dr. Way that his permit would be reconsidered if the coyotes to be studied were permanently housed in an appropriate zoological or research/educational institution instead of his residence.

In your letter you included an excerpt from Dr. Way's website. Please read the following responses in regards to this excerpt:

1. Coyotes are a valuable furbearer resource and as such, coyote hunting and trapping is strictly regulated. Massachusetts has one of the shortest coyote hunting and trapping seasons in the United States. The Massachusetts hunting and trapping season occurs when coyote pelts are prime, and thus the harvested animal is not wasted. In many states, coyote hunting is open year-round.
2. Baiting is a common hunting practice in many areas and aids in the hunting and trapping of an elusive predator such as the coyote.
3. Bag limits, season length, and season timing are tools to control the number of animals harvested. Coyotes occur at high densities and have a very high reproductive capacity, therefore a bag limit is not necessary to control the number of coyotes harvested. Hunters and trappers pay for the

www.masswildlife.org

Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

Field Headquarters, One Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, MA 01581 (508) 389-6300 Fax (508) 389-7890


An Agency of the Department of Fisheries Wildlife & Environmental Law Enforcement

opportunity to harvest a coyote in the fee for obtaining a hunting and/or trapping license. This fee generates money for wildlife conservation and management.

4. The use of hounds, as with baiting, is a common hunting practice in many areas that aids in the hunting of an elusive predator such as the coyote.
5. The use of household rat/mouse poisons is regulated in M.G.L. Ch. 131 § 43. The manufacturing and use of household rat/mouse poisons is also regulated by the federal government.
6. Under M.G.L. Ch. 131 § 37, a property owner is allowed to kill an animal that is in the act of causing damage to their property. The property owner may not kill the animal for merely being present on the property.
7. The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife uses sound, scientific, peer reviewed research as a basis for all management decisions and education. We try to educate the public about coyotes in a variety of ways ranging from handouts and posters to public presentations on coyote ecology. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife staff field numerous emails and calls from the general public regarding coyotes. We emphasize the importance of non-lethal techniques to avoid and prevent conflicts with coyotes.
8. Wildlife Services does not have jurisdiction over coyotes in Massachusetts and a permit is required to do any Problem Animal Control (PAC) work.
9. Coyote hunting and trapping allows for the sustainable use of an abundant and valuable natural resource. Coyote hunting and trapping benefits the public in a variety of ways, from localized population management to nuisance wildlife control.
10. The MDFW promotes the ecological, intrinsic, aesthetic, educational, and natural resource values of coyotes through public education and regulated hunting and trapping.

Please feel free to contact the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife if you have any further questions. Also, please visit the following website to find more information regarding coyote ecology and other wildlife-related questions: www.mass.wildlife.org.

Sincerely,


Deputy Director of Field Operations
Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
Field Headquarters
1 Rabbit Hill Rd.
Westborough, MA 01581
508-389-6302