

PROJECT COYOTE

F O S T E R I N G C O E X I S T E N C E



May 10, 2011

Indiana Natural Resources Commission
Indiana Government Center North
100 N Senate Ave. Rm. N501
Indianapolis IN 46204

RE: LSA #11-4- proposed rule to amend 312 IAC 9-10-7 governing requirements for field trial permit applications and field trials for coyote and foxes on a dog training ground

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of Project Coyote, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, our Indiana constituents, and the undersigned scientists, wildlife biologists, veterinarians, and attorneys we wish to express our strong opposition to LSA #11-4 – the proposed rule to amend 312 IAC 9-10-7 governing requirements for field trial permit applications and field trials for coyote and foxes on a dog training ground. We believe that the Indiana Natural Resources Commission (INRC) needs to take a firm stand in banning this practice altogether. If the proposed rule is approved, the INRC will be legalizing and permitting a practice (hereafter “penning”) that runs counter to fundamental concepts of wildlife management and violates the principle of fair chase.

Last year the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) voted to ban coyote and fox penning statewide. They made this decision after appointing a task force to consider all options and after an undercover investigation of penning operations led to the arrest of 12 people and the issuance of 46 citations for various illegal activities which showed how difficult- if not impossible- it is to enforce rules on a practice that is inherently fraught with illicit and unethical behavior. Moreover, fox and coyote deaths can be easily concealed as past investigations in various states have revealed. If permitted, the demand for more coyotes and foxes will go unabated, creating an enticement to violate the regulations, and the serious threat of disease transmission will persist. As more states follow Florida’s lead in prohibiting this practice, penning operators will simply move their operations to states where it is permitted as had been the case with dog and cock fighting (both dog and cock fighting are now banned nationwide).

We therefore urge the INRC to reject the proposed rules that seek to regulate penning instead of banning the practice altogether (as was being considered by the Commission in the spring of 2010). As outlined below, there are serious ethical, ecological, disease and health-related issues associated with penning that make a compelling case to end this practice statewide in perpetuity:

INHUMANE: Capturing, transporting, marketing, and penning wild animals for dog training is inherently inhumane and should be banned for this reason alone. Pitting domestic canines (hounds bred and scored for their speed, persistence and aggression) against their contained wild cousins is ethically indefensible. This practice parallels dog- and cockfighting – activities made illegal in all U.S. states in the last twenty years, largely on ethical grounds. Moreover, exposure to repeated, prolonged and unavoidable pursuit results in chronic physiological stress and death. In addition to continual pursuit, animals used in penning operations are often kept in inhumane conditions without access to water or food. Most of these penned wild canids suffer and die- literally torn apart by the dog pack.

ECOLOGICALLY RECKLESS: Transporting and marketing wild coyotes and foxes for penning purposes are ecologically reckless. Inter- and intrastate trade and transportation of wildlife is one of the primary contributors to disease transmission and historically has led to the spread of rabies and other zoonotic diseases. Millions of dollars are being spent on rabies control in several states desperate to try to curb the disease. And those responsible for having contributed to the spread of rabies have not been able to be held accountable. The disease poses a threat to wildlife, livestock and other domestic animals and to people. The public safety threat of rabies alone should be cause enough to ban this practice; add costs and economic implications associated with its control and there is simply no justification for the continuation of penning.

Penning, and the associated trade in wild coyotes and foxes, has been linked to the introduction of the northern hydatid tapeworm, *Echinococcus multilocularis*, into places far removed from its natural boreal forest habitat. This tiny tapeworm, almost invisible to the naked eye, is well adapted to canids, wild and domestic, having its normal life cycle in them as fully reproductive, egg shedding worms (the infective eggs are in the canids' feces) and in the cyst-infested prey they normally kill and eat.

The infective eggs are normally consumed by future prey and are also picked up by grazing stock that become infected with cysts. It is also zoonotic, transmissible to humans, where its larval form, known as hydatid or alveolar cysts, is highly invasive and, in fact, potentially metastatic, like a cancer. The philosophical and ethical issues of live baiting/training notwithstanding, this environmental and public health issue is enough reason for a sensible policy to forbid the practice. Citing some of these health and ecological concerns, the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies passed a resolution in 2008 urging the adoption of state-by-state regulations prohibiting the importation or interstate movement of foxes and coyotes for the purpose of stocking coursing pens or for release and pursuit by hounds outside of coursing pens.

SCIENCE – NOT HERESAY – SHOULD BE THE BASIS FOR MANAGEMENT DECISIONS:

Coyote and fox penning is not an effective method of coyote and fox control as some proponents of the practice avow. As Dr. Stanley D. Gehrt, Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology for the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Ohio State University and lead researcher of the Cook County Coyote Research Study, stated in a letter to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources in support of a ban on this practice:

“The contention that the marketing of coyotes is necessary to control coyotes is not supported by any evidence. Throughout its range, the coyote has thrived with the least amount of protection afforded any game animal. This is particularly true in the Midwest, and sportsmen have been able to take this animal with little restrictions. Indeed, it is well demonstrated that even offering bounties (thereby increasing the economic value of the coyote) has never successfully altered coyote numbers over large areas. I don’t think it is consistent for management agencies to maintain that coyotes need little regulation while some trappers maintain that their activity (or business, in this case) is necessary for the control of coyotes. It is, therefore, misleading for proponents of the marketing of coyotes to suggest that their activities have any effect on coyote populations on a statewide level. There is simply no evidence to support this.”

For these reasons, we strongly urge the INRC to reject LSA #11-4 and instead follow Florida’s lead by enacting a permanent ban on “filed trials”/ the use of dogs to take, kill, or harass coyotes or foxes in confined areas and all trade in coyotes and foxes for such purposes.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Respectfully submitted,



Camilla H. Fox
Executive Director, Project Coyote
Wildlife Consultant, Animal Welfare Institute

CC: Governor Mitch Daniels (mdaniels@gov.in.gov)

And on behalf of:

Steve Wells
Executive Director
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Cotati, CA

Marc Bekoff, PhD
Professor Emeritus, University of Colorado, Boulder
Advisory Board, Project Coyote
Boulder, CO

Toni Bianchi, CDBC, CPDT
Certified Dog Behavior Consultant
Positive Experience Training School, Inc.
Valparaiso, IN

Kevin Crooks, PhD
Associate Professor, Dept. of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO

Kirk Cunningham, PhD
Conservation Chair
Sierra Club, Rocky Mountain Chapter, CO
Denver, CO

Chris Darimont, PhD
NSERC Postdoctoral Fellow
Wilmers Lab, Department of Environmental Studies
University of California, Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA

Megan Draheim, MS, PhD candidate
George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
East Coast Consultant, Project Coyote
Washington, DC

Jacque Emel, PhD
Professor of Geography
Director of the Graduate School of Geography
Clark University
Worcester, MA

Michael W. Fox, D.Sc., PhD., B.Vet.Med., M.R.C.V.S.
Veterinarian, Bioethicist and syndicated columnist
Advisory Board, Project Coyote
Minneapolis, MN

Steven J. Frech, DVM
Scandia Veterinary Clinic
Scandia, MN

Anja Heister, PhD Candidate
University of Montana
Missoula, MT

Rick A. Hopkins, PhD
Principal and Senior Predator Ecologist
Live Oak Associates, Inc.
San Jose, CA

Jean Hofve, DVM
Veterinarian
Denver, CO

Tom Huhnerkoch DVM, RN
Mountain Cats Trust
Lead, SD

Dale Jamieson, PhD
Director of Environmental Studies
Professor of Environmental Studies and Philosophy Affiliated Professor of Law Environmental
Studies Program New York University
New York, NY

Connie L. Johnston, PhD candidate
Graduate School of Geography
Clark University, Worcester, MA

Rachael Jones, DVM
Southlane Veterinary Hospital
Valparaiso, IN

Christopher Keeley, DVM
Southlane Veterinary Hospital
Valparaiso, IN

Adam Lewandowski, MS
Wildlife Program Coordinator, CA Tahoe Conservancy
South Lake Tahoe, CA

Robert Long, PhD
Research Ecologist
Western Transportation Institute, Montana State University
Editor, Noninvasive Survey Methods for Carnivores
Ellensburg, WA

Malcolm R. MacPherson, PhD
Retired scientist
Santa Fe, New Mexico

D. Gordon Mott, MF
USFS Retired
Licensed Maine Forester
Lakeville ME

Joe Mueller, MS
Professor of Biology and Field Ecology
College of Marin
Kentfield, CA

Sanjayan Muttulingam, PhD
Research Affiliate
Univ. of Montana, Department of Wildlife
Missoula, MT

Michael P. Nelson, PhD
Associate Professor of Environmental Ethics
Lyman Briggs College, Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and Department of Philosophy
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI

Arnold Newman, PhD
Executive Director, The International Society for the Preservation of the Tropical Rain Forest
Sherman Oaks, CA

Laura M. Nirenberg, JD Candidate
Founding Executive Director, Wildlife-Orphanage, Inc.
LaPorte, IN

Reed F. Noss, PhD
Davis-Shine Professor of Conservation Biology University of Central Florida Department of
Biology

Orlando, FL

Felicia B. Nutter, DVM, PhD, DACZM
Wildlife Veterinarian and Epidemiologist
Research Assistant Professor
Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
North Grafton, MA

Sherry L. Olson, PhD Volunteer Atmospheric Chemist
National Center for Atmospheric Research
Boulder, CO

Paul Paquet, PhD
Senior Scientist Carnivore Specialist, Raincoast Conservation Foundation
Advisory Board, Project Coyote
Mecham, Saskatchewan

Chris Parsons, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Env. Science & Policy, George Mason Univ.
Fairfax, VA

David Parsons, MS
Wildlife Biologist , U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Retired
Advisory Board, Project Coyote
Albuquerque, NM

Walter L. Pepperman II, JD
Attorney, Wildlife Advocate, & Registered Maine Guide
Middletown Springs, VT

Richard P. Reading, PhD
Associate Research Professor
University of Denver
Denver, CO

Kirk Robinson, JD, PhD
Director, Western Wildlife Conservancy
Salt Lake City, UT

Holmes Rolston, III, PhD
Environmental ethicist
Department of Philosophy

Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO
Debbie Risberg, Wildlife Biologist
Wildlife Programs Manager
Animal Protection of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM

Nicole Rosmarino, PhD
Wildlife Program Director
WildEarth Guardians
Denver, CO

Allen Rutberg, PhD
Assistant Director, Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy
North Grafton, MA

Hope Ryden, Wildlife Biologist
Author, God's Dog: A Celebration of the North American Coyote
New York, NY

Amelia Ryan, MS
Biologist, Point Reyes Station
Point Reyes, CA

D.J. Schubert
Wildlife Biologist
Animal Welfare Institute

Mona Seymour, PhD candidate
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA

Michael Soulé, PhD
Professor Emeritus, Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz
Past President and co-founder, Society for Conservation Biology
Advisory Board, Project Coyote
Paonia, CO

Elisabeth Stoddard, MS, PhD Candidate
Clark University
Worcester, MA

Stephen F. Stringham, PhD
Director, Bear Viewing Association
Soldotna, AK

Margaret Struhsacker, MS
Canid biologist - retired
Morrisville, VT

Jay Tischendorf, BSc, DVM
Veterinarian, Zoonotic disease expert
Director, American Ecological Research Institute (AERIE)
Great Falls, MT

John Toppenberg, Director
Alaska Wildlife Alliance
Anchorage, AK

Jay Tutchton, Esq. JD
General Counsel
WildEarth Guardians
Denver, CO

Geri Vistein, MA, MS
Conservation Biologist, Project Coyote
Belfast, ME

John A. Vucetich, PhD
Wildlife Biologist
Assistant Professor, School of Forest Resources and Env. Science
Michigan Technological Univ.
Houghton, MI

David Wade
Endangered Small Animal Conservation Fund
IUCN/SCC Small Carnivore Specialist Group member
Monmouth, IL

Paul Waldau, D. Phil., JD, MA
President, Religion and Animals Institute
Sherborn, MA

Jonathan G. Way, PhD
Eastern Coyote Research
Barnstable, MA

Bruce Wagman, Esq., JD
Schiff Hardin LLP
San Francisco, CA

Amaroq Weiss, Esq. MS, JD
Past Director of Western Species Conservation, Defenders of Wildlife
Board of Directors, California Wolf Center
Ashland, OR

Larry Weiss, Esq. JD
Retired attorney
Denver, CO

Lynne Williams, Esq. JD
Environmental Attorney
Bar Harbor, ME

Dianne Wittner, Wildlife Biologist
Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation
Alberta, Canada

Jennifer Wolch, PhD
Dean, College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley
William W. Wurster Professor of City & Regional Planning
Advisory Board, Project Coyote
Berkeley, CA