

# The Current Regulatory Environment of Urban Coyote Control – A Private WCO Perspective

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**Abstract:** Social, political, and legal considerations have contributed to an unfavorable regulatory environment for lethal control of urban coyotes. I analyze and break adown that environment from a Wildlife Control Operator (WCO) perspective. Currently three significant factors frame the issue, but a fourth could be emerging. First, our hands are tied: I use the situation in Colorado to illustrate the point. Compounding factors include the need for a paradigm shift in how rules are derived, the lag-time factor in agency response to issues, and the tendency toward bureaucracy/over-regulation. Second, human dimensions rule: I critique the downside of human dimensions in wildlife damage management, including over-reliance on public opinion tools/processes, the sacred cow of humaneness, the influence of animal welfare/rights protagonists, and changing demographics. Third, most people prefer coexistence over lethal control: I briefly look at how this factor defines the current American mind-set but is nonetheless unrealistic. Fourth, the coyotes are coming: I highlight how the burgeoning urban coyote problem could be changing perceptions and attitudes about lethal control and the regulatory environment.

**Key Words:** *Canis latrans*, coyotes, human dimensions, lethal control, regulations, urban coyotes, wildlife control operators

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## INTRODUCTION

Social, political, and legal considerations have contributed to an unfavorable regulatory environment for lethal control of urban coyotes (*Canis latrans*). I would simply like to highlight my impressions of that environment. My perspective comes from an educational background in wildlife management (B.S. 1967 and M.S. 1969, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University) and 36 years of seasonal experience as a fur trapper/private Animal Damage Control trapper, coupled with 17 years as a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator (NWCO) in Colorado.

Currently, three significant factors seem to frame the issue. However, a fourth could be emerging.

## OUR HANDS ARE TIED

The use of effective tools/methods for coyote control in urban/suburban settings is very restricted. It is not that we do not have the tools, methods, expertise, and resources to do the job. We certainly do, and the technology is improving all the time (Logan et al. 1999, Kamler et al. 2000, Earle et al. 2003, Shivik et al. 2005). It is that the rules and regulations will not allow us to do our job. Let me use my home state, Colorado, as an example. We went from one of the least restrictive, most reasonable sets of trapping regulations in the country to one of the most restrictive in the short span of 1994 to 1997. What happened? Although my affectionate title for what transpired is “The chronology of a stacked deck,” I will try to be euphemistic.

A series of events/developments in the early 1990s prompted the Colorado Wildlife Commission and Division of Wildlife (DOW) to conduct a “Furbearer Management Program Review” in 1994/95 – a stakeholder process to decide the fate of trapping in Colorado. The events included:

1. The International Standards Organization (ISO)

technical committee (TC191) humane trap standards and EU fur/trap ban (EU Regulation 3259/91) controversies

2. An adversarial relationship between the trapping community and the Commission/DOW leadership
3. A successful ballot initiative that significantly curtailed bear hunting in Colorado (1992)
4. Elevation of social science to equal weight with biological science in deciding wildlife policy (Governor’s Conference on Wildlife, 1993; and Revised DOW Long Range Plan, 1994)
5. A series of opinion polls indicating the general public did not support trapping
6. A successful ballot initiative banning trapping on public lands in Arizona (1994)
7. Threats from the animal rights/welfare community of a ballot initiative to end all trapping in Colorado
8. A roughly 10-year decline in furbearer license sales and fur trapping activity/harvest in Colorado.

To no one’s surprise, the stakeholders could not reach a consensus, so the DOW staff recommended drastic changes in the regulations and the Commission approved. Suddenly Colorado had the most restrictive regulations of the 11 western states. To say no one was happy with the outcome is an understatement. Trappers were disillusioned and furious. In spite of many concessions in their favor, the animal rights folks immediately began to orchestrate what would become Amendment 14 to the State Constitution. The agriculture community, spearheaded by the Commissioner of Agriculture, began pursuing legislation (SB 96-167) that would relax DOW regulations to allow the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) to effectively carry out its statutory authority to control depredating animals.

Amendment 14, which passed 52% to 48% in 1996, prohibited the “take of wildlife with any leghold trap, any instant kill body-gripping design trap, or by poison or

snare.” Regulations implementing Amendment 14 were developed in 1997. Several exemptions were allowed. Those relative to coyote control were: 1) One 30-day period per calendar year per parcel of land to protect commercial livestock or crop production; 2) An exemption for health departments to protect human health/safety; 3) The use of non-lethal snares, traps specifically designed not to kill (i.e., cage traps and padded-jaw footholds) or nets to take wildlife for scientific research, relocation, or for veterinary treatment. Noticeably missing were exemptions to protect pets or to protect personal property on non-agriculture lands, such as beavers (*Castor canadensis*) destroying ornamental trees on a 5-acre “ranchette” or municipal golf course.

So where did that leave us? Suppose a suburban homeowners’ association wants my services to remove coyotes killing their pets. What are my options? I could use:

1. Padded-jaw footholds or non-lethal snares (e.g., the Collarum™) to capture and relocate offending coyotes. But DOW policy doesn’t allow relocation of coyotes (rightly so, I might add).
2. Cage traps to capture and then euthanize the coyotes. But the success rate would be very low and the cost very high (Way et al. 2002).
3. Some combination of calling, decoy dogs, and shooting to take the coyotes. But a city ordinance prohibits the discharge of firearms within the city limits.

Of course, if coyotes are being aggressive toward humans, the health/safety exemption would come into play *if* the health department and DOW concur there is a real threat. Nonetheless, our hands are largely tied, and I suspect a similar dilemma exists in other states (e.g., AZ, CA, WA, MA). But as difficult as the situation is, there are also factors that compound the dilemma and make it difficult to change. The need for a paradigm shift in how urban nuisance wildlife rules are derived/written: new problems need new rules.

Most current rules, regs, and statutes are written from one or more of the following mind-sets:

1. Recreational fur harvest (i.e., traditional fur trapping);
2. “Fair chase” (i.e., a sporting or sportsmanship perspective);
3. Agricultural damage control (i.e., rural applications);
4. Domestic animal (i.e., pets)/veterinary medicine (i.e., clinical situations).

I suggest that control of depredating coyotes in urban/suburban settings does not really fit any of these. It is really a whole new ballgame that needs a different set of rules (and regulations).

The “lag-time loophole factor” is the tendency for agencies, institutions, municipalities, industries, and the public to be several steps behind the growth curve in recognizing and responding to an emerging issue/crisis (e.g., urban coyote depredation). There are understandable reasons (both good and bad) why this tendency exists, but the fact is we are often slow to “get the picture” until there is a serious wake-up call. Even when we do see the need for action, it often takes a while to implement a plan. When that time delay becomes an excuse to shirk responsible action it becomes a loophole of sorts; hence the name. Perhaps events leading up to Pearl Harbor and

9/11 are examples in the bigger picture. In our case, maybe we have been so focused on threatened/endangered species concerns that we have been slow to recognize and respond to the unprecedented invasion/proliferation of wildlife in urban settings, such as white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), resident Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), and now coyotes. A related example might be the slow acceptance of wildlife damage management (WDM) as a legitimate and vital aspect of the wildlife management field by the overall professional community.

The ever-spiraling tendency toward bureaucracy and over-regulation is the cultural mind-set that government, licensing/certification and regulation are the answer and more of each is better. Currently, there is a very noticeable movement nationally pushing the NWCO industry in that direction. It is happening in Colorado, with the CDA Pesticide Section considering an unprecedented commercial license category for use of “devices” to control commensal rodents, pigeons, and bats in buildings. It’s coming from the animal welfare industry, with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) having solicited state oversight agencies to adopt their rules for the NWCO industry. It is coming from the pest control industry with the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) pushing their agenda as they seek to merge wildlife control with pest control. Even some in the National Wildlife Control Operators Association (NWCOA) are lobbying for nationwide licensing of WCOs. It is almost as if we as a nation have bought into the great delusion that more government (i.e., legislation, licensing, regulations) is the solution, so let us embrace it! The bottom line to all this is that our hands are tied, and the knot is pretty tight.

## HUMAN DIMENSIONS RULE

Opinion polls, majority rule, and politics now largely dictate wildlife management policy. Let me acknowledge up front that human dimensions (HD) is a valid and vital element of wildlife management, and we have been using it long before we even knew what to call it. By definition, the two are inseparable. But there are some aspects of it, or the use of it, that I do not like. For example, in Colorado, I personally believe over-valuing and exploiting human dimensions by the DOW/Commission guided the whole trapping debate to a very unfavorable outcome not only for trappers, but also for wildlife management and the general public. There is an axiom that says, “Good things gone too far go bad.” A classic example might be the Endangered Species Act. Another might be the role of human dimensions in wildlife management. Let me break it down a bit more.

Over-reliance on opinion polls and majority rule skews wildlife policy decisions; ballot initiatives and stakeholder processes fit here. It is my contention that the general public is largely uninformed and/or misinformed about the realities of wildlife management, if for no other reason than most of their information is via the media, which has a record of bias and distorted or emotionalized information. In fact, some would accuse the news media of creating the news rather than reporting it. I also think it is safe to say that the majority of urban Americans have little firsthand knowledge or experience dealing with real-

life wildlife issues. If perception is “reality” but the perception is wrong, where does that lead? Let me cite a few examples of public misinformation/misperception.

Clients of mine commonly apologize (i.e., they feel bad) for asking me to remove their problem wildlife because, after all, “they were here first” and “we keep encroaching on their habitat.” But the fact is many of our most common nuisance species are not native to Colorado Springs, such as fox squirrels (*Sciurus niger*), red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), raccoons (*Procyon lotor*), and resident Canada geese. They were either introduced, or extended their range there because human development created favorable habitat. Need we mention what coyotes are doing all across the United States? They were not necessarily here first.

Similarly, the invasion/proliferation of native species in urban settings is in full swing in Colorado Springs. The densities of many species, including mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), black bears (*Ursus americanus*), and mountain lions (*Felis concolor*), are higher inside portions of the city limits than outside. One rehabilitator I work with, who resides in a highly urbanized area of the city, had 21 different black bears in her yard over a period of 2 months last fall. Who is encroaching on whose habitat?

An interesting example was illustrated in the oft-cited “Illinois Residents’ Opinions and Attitudes Regarding Trapping...” phone poll (Duda and Young 1994). At the beginning of the interview, respondents were asked their opinion of regulated trapping. Twenty-two percent approved of trapping and 71% disapproved. When asked, “How much do you know about fur hunting and trapping?”, 83% said they knew little or nothing. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked again what their opinion of trapping was, based on the interview. Overall approval of trapping increased from 22% to 46%, while disapproval decreased from 71% to 46%. A little education goes a long way.

The most common reasons respondents to opinion polls give for disapproval of trapping are: 1) traps are perceived as “cruel/inhumane devices”; and 2) concern over catching/harming endangered species (Duda and Young 1994, Fulton et al. 1995, Manfredo et al. 1999). The fact is, various foothold and snare devices are some of the primary tools used to enhance and protect endangered species. Not only are they effectively and safely used to control predators that threaten endangered and many other species (Greene et al. 1995), snares with stops were the primary tool used to initially live-capture wolves (*Canis lupus*) for reintroduction to Yellowstone (E. Bangs, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, pers. commun.). Heavy-duty longspring traps are the primary tool for recapture of wolves to re-collar them (E. Bangs, pers. commun.), foot snares are being used to live-capture and translocate mountain lions (Logan et al. 1999), and #3 soft-catch footholds were the primary tool used to live-capture lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) for reintroduction in Colorado (T. Shenk, DOW, pers. commun.). Also, note that the technology is improving all the time, and newer devices surpass the stringent humane trap standards of the USA-EU ISO (Shivik et al. 2005). Does the public know this? Are they being told? If not, why not, and who should?

In principle, I support the use of stakeholder

processes if participants have a legitimate stake in outcomes and the process is not driven by politics, political correctness, or patronage. Nowadays, however, it seems anyone with even a casual interest in the topic can be a “stakeholder.”

But I do not think we have to set up a stakeholder process or conduct a public opinion poll every time we have a policy decision to make. First of all, how did we get into managing wildlife by public opinion poll in the first place? Is the citizenry really who we are contending with? A perusal of the HD literature would seem to indicate so. But I am not so sure. For one thing, our basic values about how animals should be treated are not fundamentally different from those of the general public. We do not want to inflict unnecessary pain on animals or kill them needlessly. Our ethics (i.e., what we believe is right or allowable) may differ, and our morals (our conduct or what we actually do) may be very different, but we are largely on the same page when it comes to cruelty or needless killing. Also, I see the general public as mostly a “silent majority.” They are not the ones asking the questions; we are. And, when asked a question, they are going to give an answer, whether they know much about the subject or not.

Our opponent is really the animal welfare/rights crusader activists (Cockrell 1999). They are the ones instigating ballot initiatives, suing the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and inciting the general public. The arena for this “game” we are in is the stakeholder meeting room and the media. The citizenry is the audience and the referees. We need them to cheer for us and help set the rules. But we are the ones on the field calling the plays. Unfortunately, because of the subject matter (i.e., animal welfare), our opponent has a decided home field advantage. We can win this game and have a lot of fan support, but we will have to raise our play to a whole new level. Our opponent is not really the general public.

In addition, we have a representative form of government. We should not have to have a public vote on every issue. This country was founded on the belief that individual and minority rights should be protected from the tyranny of majority rule (i.e., public opinion). That is why we have a republican form of government instead of a direct democracy. The majority is not always right. The following quotes say it well:

*“It is the besetting vice of democracies to substitute public opinion for law. This is the usual form in which the masses of men exhibit their tyranny.”*

– James Fenimore Cooper

*“Individual rights are not subject to a public vote; a majority has no right to vote away the rights of a minority.”*

– Ayn Rand

Perhaps the principle of law known as the “Public Trust Doctrine” fits in here as well. In paraphrased wildlife management terms, it says, “Government has a duty, on behalf of the people, to protect, manage, and conserve renewable wildlife resources. This duty cannot be delegated to the electorate (i.e., the general public) for determination by popular vote.” Over-reliance on public

opinion can easily become abdication of our responsibility, which in turn devalues our expertise.

Secondly, "What is going to keep the most people happy?" should not be the question. We really should ask, "What is the best way to solve the problem?" All too often, we are guilty of subordinating principle to expediency. When the Joint Chiefs of Staff are deciding war strategy, tactics, and weaponry, they do not poll the general public. In a mild way, we too, are involved in a type of warfare. I also like the quote from James Bovard, "Democracy has to be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner."

Thirdly, public opinion polls are often flawed, misused, and politicized. Who sponsors the poll and how the questions are worded can make a big difference. Also, results are often contradictory between polls and within polls. And they are often wrong. Simply put, you can get them to say whatever you want. They are especially dangerous when used to predict outcomes.

The familiar poll (Fulton et al. 1995) that fueled the DOW Furbearer Management Review Process (FMRP) and Amendment 14 is an example. It projected that Amendment 14 would pass with 61% of the vote. It did pass, but only 52% to 48%. That's a big difference. It also indicated that 45% of rural voters would support Amendment 14. And yet, in the 32 (of 63) counties casting less than 5,000 votes, the results were 30% Yes and 70% No. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents indicated that trapping is never acceptable. Yet 87% said trapping is okay to prevent spread of disease. You do the math. Although 84% of respondents said it is acceptable to hunt if done primarily to get meat, 91% said it is not acceptable to hunt primarily to get a trophy (i.e., large antlers or a taxidermy mount). Do you think the DOW is going to close the bull elk (*Cervus elaphus*) season and issue only cow tags in the near future? Doubt it.

Ten years ago, Daniel Decker, a very familiar authority on human dimensions, cautioned wildlife managers "not to become servile to public opinion by relying too heavily on opinion polls to determine what they ought to do" (Decker and Chase 1997). Unfortunately, I think that is just what we have done. Maybe it is time to back off a bit. Let us not automatically concede to the tyranny of public opinion.

Humaneness has become a sacred cow. We have been made to believe that humaneness is the most important factor in deciding what tools/methods to use for wildlife control. It is not.

Sentiments or emotionalized attitudes, which by definition are subjective, should not automatically trump science, which by definition is supposed to be objective. Other considerations, such as human safety, ethics, selectivity, efficiency, effectiveness, practicality, cost-effectiveness, etc., can be equally important. The International Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies in its "Trapping Best Management Practices," has done a good job of integrating other considerations into their evaluations / recommendations. If Maslow's hierarchy of human needs is correct, human safety and security will ultimately take precedence over animal welfare. According to a survey conducted by Reiter et al. (1999), when respondents were asked to rank importance of

factors to be considered when selecting management methods, human safety ranked first, followed by animal suffering and effectiveness. The only factor with an average score toward "not important" on the scale was public opinion!

Even the definition of humaneness is difficult to agree on, because it is so arbitrary and subjective. Besides, the concept of humaneness in nature is a myth. It is at best idealistic, at worst a fraud. One reason we can strongly support lethal control is because it is "nature's way." It is as natural as it gets and it fits reality. There is no need to apologize for it.

The animal protection, welfare, and rights protagonists are alive and well and wealthy. And unfortunately for many of us, they exercise great influence over the media, general public, and even wildlife agencies/ institutions (e.g., Colorado Wildlife Commission DOW). There are a lot of groups out there advocating humane treatment of animals. Wywialowski (1991), citing an earlier paper (Silberman 1987), indicated that the organized humane movement during the 1980s included over 7,000 different groups. According to the website <http://activistcash.com>, HSUS, the wealthiest animal rights group in the country, has \$113 million in assets. Their operating budget in 2005 was over \$95 million. In 2004, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), another well-known animal rights group, received \$29 million in donations. As we well know, both groups are strongly opposed to lethal control of wildlife. Think they do not influence public perception? In public relations warfare, he who frames the terms of the debate almost always wins, especially if the terms are ones like "pain," "suffering," "cruel," and "inhumane." We have let the animal rights folks do just that. It is time to reframe the debate.

Changing demographics have tilted the playing field: "We are not in Kansas anymore, Toto." I distinctly remember the unsettled feeling I had while listening to the livestock report on KOA Radio in Denver sometime in the mid-1970s. The announcer said, "This is a landmark day in our state's history. For the first time, there are now more people in Colorado than cows." Significant change was on the way.

As our country moves away (literally) from a rural, agriculture based economy/lifestyle and toward urbanization, more and more people do not have hands-on experience with farm life/subsistence living, livestock/wildlife, and the harsh realities of living with "Mother Nature." And each succeeding generation gets further removed. Predictably, they are going to have more protectionist attitudes toward wildlife, be less tolerant of lethal control measures, and be more dependent on second-hand information (Manfredo and Zinn 1996). The momentum for support of lethal control is going in the wrong direction. That is one reason why aggressive public education by wildlife professionals and agencies is so vital.

You can not separate politics from processes and outcomes. Unfortunately, he who is in power or has the most money has the most clout. And he who has the clout usually gets his way, even if the outcome is not what is best for all those who have a stake. In our case that is wildlife and wildlife management. Maybe even the public. We have seen this time and time again in

Colorado. And it is happening all across the country. Other than possibly appointing or voting for the most favorable candidates, there is not much we can do about it. Ideally, biology and our professional expertise should be neutral/objective. Unfortunately, "it is not going to happen." It is human nature.

There is no doubt that the tide of public opinion is very powerful. Human dimensions do rule, and in recent years its role in wildlife management has fostered an unfavorable climate for lethal wildlife control. But that climate could moderate over time. We will look at that possibility shortly. In the meantime, let us not forget that first and foremost we are wildlife managers/biologists, not wildlife sociologists.

### **MOST PEOPLE PREFER PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE OVER LETHAL CONTROL**

Americans do not like to be responsible for hurting or killing anything. This point comes right out of human dimensions and could be listed as a subpoint under it. However, I have chosen to separate it out because, right or wrong, it largely defines the current American mindset/value system.

I have already alluded to America's love affair with animals, both domestic and wild. A recent newspaper article (Donn 2007) noted that Americans own 130 million dogs and cats, and that 47% of pet owners consider their pets "family members." In Colorado, as elsewhere, people love having *Animal Planet* and the *Discovery Channel* right in their backyard. People move to Colorado because they want to see and have wildlife (Manfredo and Zinn 1996). Many move to the outlying suburbs for that very reason. They welcome wildlife and do things to attract it, including feeding it. A significant portion of my business comes from the popularity of bird feeders alone.

Even when wildlife becomes a nuisance, many people have a high tolerance and adopt a "live and let live" attitude. At the organizational level, "coexisting with wildlife" has become the motto, if not the mantra, of many wildlife agencies and groups. That is well and good, as long as options for lethal control are incorporated when necessary. In light of all this, we in WDM should support an integrated approach to reducing human-wildlife conflicts, one that is firmly rooted in public education, prevention, and non-lethal control measures.

However, we must recognize and educate people to the fact that peaceful coexistence is not the norm in nature, nor in many human cultures around the world. At some point it breaks down and more drastic measures are needed. We would all like peace in the Middle East. But to expect Jews and Arabs to peacefully coexist in Palestine or Israel, or Sunnis and Shiites to live happily ever after in Iraq, is wishful thinking. "It is not going to happen." Similarly, to expect coyotes and wolves to peacefully coexist with people is both naïve and unrealistic (see Kojola and Kuittinen 2002, Harper et al. 2005, Bangs et al. 2004). Coyotes and wolves do not play by our rules. The key to their survival is to exploit their environment (Timm et al. 2004, Bangs et al. 2004). That is all they know to do. And sooner or later it comes at the expense of people. There will always be a need for lethal control.

### **THE COYOTES ARE COMING**

Is the burgeoning coyote population across the U.S. prompting a change in perceptions, attitudes, and regulations? It is common knowledge that coyotes have been attacking, killing, and eating pets in suburban settings in several states for some time. Now it has been well-documented that: 1) coyotes have dramatically increased their range; 2) they are moving into and flourishing in highly urban settings; and 3) aggressive coyote behavior toward people is increasing and spreading (Timm et al. 2004). To date, coyote attacks on humans have been reported in at least 16 states and 4 Canadian provinces (Timm and Baker 2007). It could be that we are seeing just the tip of the iceberg. Matters could get much worse in a hurry.

With the rapid, widespread surge in human-wildlife conflicts in urban/suburban settings now overlaying a long history of agriculture wildlife damage, a growing segment of the public is unhappy with some of our wildlife and the limited measures available to protect personal property and human health/safety. A change in attitude toward lethal control may be slow and it may be mild, but there are hints of change. The backlash may never be enough for dramatic change (e.g., overturning a constitutional amendment or restoring "recreational" fur trapping), but if current trends continue, sooner or later we will exceed cultural carrying capacity and people will be more supportive of lethal control.

Even if the current public majority opposes it, the "Not in my back yard" factor is already generating some activism for change. The fact is, most people who experience a serious wildlife conflict firsthand (e.g., coyotes attacking pets or threatening kids) are very willing to use lethal measures. Many actually request it. (They are the ones we should be polling!) In Colorado Springs last year, nearly everyone who contacted me because of coyotes attacking their pets indicated they would gladly sign a petition or testify before city council to allow discharge of firearms in their neighborhood. Two upper-middleclass municipalities in the Denver metro area have already been doing lethal coyote control (i.e., traps and snares) for several years under the human health/safety exemption.

I hear rumblings and goings-on in other states as well. A bill (HB106) was recently introduced in Washington State that would restore the Department of Fish and Wildlife's authority to manage furbearer populations and nuisance wildlife utilizing trapping. A bill (SF105 and HF247) prompted by urban coyote problems was recently introduced in Minnesota that would require the Department of Natural Resources to remove and relocate or dispose of undesirable or predatory wild animals in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area if requested by a local government. Proposed legislation in North Carolina would allow trapping to control coyotes in two counties where livestock depredation is rampant. CBS News recently reported on the growing coyote problem in parts of Tennessee. Hunters in Massachusetts have confronted the Department of Fish and Wildlife with concerns that the estimated 9,750 coyotes in the state are having a huge impact on the deer population. There is talk of modifying hunting regulations and utilizing WCOs. I

think it is safe to say that it is a rare day when there is not a headline somewhere in the country addressing a human-wildlife conflict, whether it be coyotes or something else, such as deer, geese, bears, beavers, alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*), etc.

In the history of wildlife and wildlife management in this country, we have gone from a seemingly inexhaustible, exploitable natural resource (in colonial times), to near extinctions, to a successful preservation/conservation movement, to a highly successful harvestable resource/sustained-yield era, to the present, where we have been blindsided by environmentalism and the animal welfare/rights movement. But the last chapter of this ongoing saga has yet to be written. The pendulum still swings. The unprecedented reinvasion/proliferation of many species of wildlife, coupled with the dramatic increase in human-wildlife conflicts, will surely provide momentum, especially now that human and pet (remember, they are family, too) safety are headline issues.

It will be very interesting to see how the public's perceptions/attitudes do change as coyote and other wildlife issues continue to evolve. But rest assured, there will always be a place/need for lethal wildlife control. Coyotes are just the latest venue. We do not have to apologize for what we do. As an old rancher/trapper said to me after the trapping fiasco in Colorado, "No need to be alarmed. Sooner or later the raccoons, skunks, and coyotes will rewrite the regulations as they need to be." I hope he was right. We will see. Right now the deck is still stacked.

In the meantime, with the help of the coyotes, we need to do what we can to cultivate a more favorable regulatory environment. It is our professional duty. We owe it to the public. In the process, we need to reassert our expertise and reestablish our reputation.

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