

Response to Citizen Petition from Nancy Tatum, Admin. Cause No. 22-FW-034

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) received a citizen petition from Nancy Tatum regarding wildlife hunting contests and sent it to the DNR to review the request. To complete this review, the DNR established a committee that included David Bausman (DNR General Counsel), Capt. Jet Quillen (Indiana Conservation Officer), Geriann Albers (Wildlife Furbearer Biologist), and Linnea Petercheff (Licensing and Permit Supervisor).

The petitioner has requested that wildlife killing contests for species of wild animals such as coyotes and foxes be prohibited in the State of Indiana. Participants usually win a prize for having taken the most animals within a certain period of time during such a contest, or other prizes such as for smallest or largest animal taken.

A survey to the general public by Purdue University found that people were neutral about contests. However, data showed there might be support for some limits, such as limiting the number of people involved in a single contest. Through research with Purdue University, a survey was done of trappers in the State of Indiana in 2021, and 7% of the respondents to the survey that hunt furbearers indicated that contests are a form of recreation that they participate in. This is comparable to the number estimated from Indiana DNR's furbearer hunting survey in 2021 in which 8% of coyote hunters that responded to the survey participate in contests. Indiana DNR's furbearer hunting survey also estimated that harvest from contests made up less than 10% of the total hunting harvest of coyotes (~2000 coyotes) and less than 3% of the total red fox hunting harvest in Indiana (~80 red foxes) in 2021.

The Indiana DNR does not know how many contests currently occur in Indiana for coyotes, foxes or other species since they are not regulated. There is no bag limit for coyotes or red foxes. Therefore, taking them during the legal hunting and trapping season, using legal methods, having permission of the landowner, and having a valid hunting or trapping license are the only requirements. Coyotes are known predators of livestock and domestic animals and many landowners, including farmers, want more of them to be taken. Some contests have been used as fundraising opportunities.

Other states such as Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Kentucky have no regulations on these predator contests. Illinois has recently received a petition to prohibit them that is currently under review. The DNR does know that eight (8) states have prohibited them, but they do not include any of the surrounding states.

There are no biological concerns as the result of these predator contests, and no safety concerns that DNR Law Enforcement is aware of as a result of these contests. Since data does not support a prohibition on them in this state, the Indiana DNR does not recommend that a prohibition on these contests be made at this time. Furthermore, to be considered for a rulemaking moratorium exemption, additional data and information would be needed to warrant a prohibition on this activity through a change to Indiana Administrative Code. DNR staff plan to reach out to the Indiana State Trapper's Association, Fur Trappers of America in Indiana and other potential groups with knowledge of these contests to obtain more information on interest and numbers of participants.