

Alberta should ban bounties on coyotes, wolves: researcher



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The Alberta government should **ban (#)** bounties on coyotes and wolves because they are inhumane and ineffective, says a wildlife researcher. *JOHN LUCAS / EDMONTON JOURNAL*

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A scientific review published in the international journal *Animals* argues that bounties should be outlawed because, despite a death toll of predators numbering in the thousands, the program doesn't work (#).

"Just look at the coyotes," said co-author Gilbert Proulx, a wildlife biologist with Alpha Wildlife Research & Management. "We killed over 25,000 of them in the last five years and they're still all over the place."

When bounty hunters shoot, snare or poison coyotes or wolves, it often makes the situation worse for farmers and ranchers in the area because aggressive newcomers move in to take the place of the original predators, he said.

"When you kill the dominant residents, then you get all those coyotes or wolves who come from everywhere and they don't know the territory and they start to do bad moves," Proulx said. "These guys cause a lot of trouble. They are the ones that kill the caribou, the calves or the cows of a farmer because they don't know their limits."

According to Proulx, bounty hunters in Alberta receive \$75 to \$500 per dead wolf. At least 1,425 wolves have been reported killed since 2010. Dead coyotes bring at least \$15. The report says at least 16 Alberta municipal jurisdictions offer or have offered bounties.

Proulx said their deaths by neck snare, strychnine poisoning or wounding by bullets can be slow and agonizing, and endangered or declining species such as grizzly bears, badgers and swift foxes can be inadvertently killed.

But others point to the heavy toll on livestock that coyotes and wolves inflict. A recent study by the Miistakis Institute in Calgary found predators had an economic impact on nearly three-quarters of Alberta beef producers.

“If there’s a problem area, for sure we would be supporting putting bounties on these animals because they do cause problems,” said Fred Hays, a policy analyst for Alberta Beef Producers.

The Alberta government does not administer any bounty programs or use them to manage wildlife programs, said Environment and Parks spokeswoman Lisa Glover. Bounty programs are typically administered by municipalities or private land owners.

The Municipal District of Bonnyville offers \$15 per coyote and \$75 per wolf in its reduction program from October through March.

“We run the program because we do see benefits from it,” said Matt Janz, the district’s director of agriculture services. “Coyotes are one of our problem species for our local farmers for predation. We’ve found that by running the program, they have a lot less predation during the year.

“During the winter season, when the animals are usually penned up in larger groups, they’re a little easier prey for these carnivores. We’ve seen the benefits of the predation level come down since we started the program.”

Visits to farms by MD officials to issue wildlife poison have dropped from 30 to 40 a year to maybe six, he said.

Proulx argues that predator-human conflicts can be reduced by simply clearing dead animals off the range to avoid attracting predators, keeping animals close to the estate, and protecting them with fences or dogs.

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