

February 25, 2009

To whom it may concern;

Re: Trapping and Relocating Coyotes

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) strongly objects to any suggestion that coyotes from Toronto, or any other urban centre for that matter, be trapped and relocated when they pose a nuisance to urban residents and/or their pets.

Firstly, the Ministry of Natural Resources does not authorize the release of nuisance wildlife more than one kilometre from their point of capture. To release them further poses a risk of disease transfer to the resident wildlife population. It also upsets the delicate balance between wildlife populations and their sources of food. Many species of wildlife are highly territorial, meaning that animals trapped in one location and released far from their point of capture may well be viewed as invaders, and killed by local wildlife.

Secondly, and perhaps more important from the perspective of farmers, rural and agricultural Ontario already has large numbers of coyotes who prey on livestock like cattle and sheep for example. Provincial payments to Ontario livestock producers to compensate them for losses to wolf and coyote predation have exceeded \$1,000,000 for the previous two fiscal years. We thoroughly expect these payments to remain at that level once the current fiscal year concludes March 31. And these payments are based on a 30-year old reimbursement schedule, which doesn't reflect current livestock values. To add more coyotes would simply exacerbate the current problem Ontario livestock producers face.

Ontario farmers and rural residents have always had to deal with the realities of coyote predation on their livestock, poultry and family pets. Expanding coyote populations have now moved into our urban areas. Urban residents cannot simply dump their problem on rural and agricultural Ontario by releasing trapped coyotes. It's illegal, unfair and moreover, inhumane! Urban residents need to solve their own coyote problems, as we in rural and agricultural Ontario have been doing for years. Welcome to our world.

Sincerely,

Bette Jean Crews
President

The OFA is the largest general farm organization in Ontario, representing 39,000 farm families. We are a dynamic farmer-led organization working to represent and champion the interests of Ontario farmers. The OFA is Ontario's voice of agriculture.

March 30, 2009

Dear Editor:

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), representing over 38,000 family farm businesses, is compelled to respond to the article about the coyote on the loose in Toronto (G&M, March 30, 2009) and the citizen response to the issue.

We strongly object to any suggestion that coyotes from Toronto, or any other urban centre for that matter, be trapped and relocated when they pose a nuisance or threat to urban residents and their pets.

As your article states, the Ministry of Natural Resources does not allow the release of nuisance wildlife more than one kilometre from their point of capture – for good reason. To release them further poses a risk of disease transfer to resident wildlife populations and also upsets the balance between wildlife and their sources of food. Many species of wildlife are highly territorial, meaning that animals trapped in one location and released far from their point of capture may well be viewed as invaders, and killed by local wildlife.

More importantly, the transfer of a coyote problem from a Toronto neighbourhood to rural Ontario is simply an unacceptable solution. Rural Ontario and our farmers already suffer large numbers of coyotes. They destroy our livestock at great expense to our farm businesses. Provincial payments to Ontario livestock producers to compensate them for losses to wolf and coyote are unacceptably low and the costs of keeping coyotes at bay are escalating. Adding Toronto's coyotes would simply exacerbate the current problem.

Ontario's farmers and rural residents have long had to deal with the realities of coyote predation on their livestock, poultry and family pets. Expanding coyote populations invading urban neighbourhoods may finally highlight the problem with Ontario's inadequate species control procedures. However, dumping the problem into the countryside is not a solution – It is illegal and moreover, inhumane! Urban residents will have to deal with problem coyotes on their own. Welcome to our world.

Sincerely,

Bette Jean Crews
President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

OFA Commentary #1409

Conquering predators on the farm

By Bruce Webster, Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture

For decades, Ontario farmers have experienced the ravages of predators on their farms, losing millions of dollars worth of lambs and calves to coyotes and wolves.

Reducing those losses and receiving adequate compensation for the damage has proven difficult. It seems now, though that the Minister of Natural Resources, Donna Cansfield has stumbled on a unique solution - at least one that works for a high priced neighborhood in the Beach community of Toronto.

The Minister has decided to move a pesky Toronto coyote to a rehabilitation area.

Now, there is no doubt that different rules will apply to the Toronto coyote's poor rural cousins. Rural based predators are not likely to receive such kid glove treatment. Likewise, rural residents, long plagued by large coyote and wolf populations that threaten pets, children and livestock businesses have always been left to fend for themselves.

If Minister Cansfield believes in fair and equal treatment, she will be particularly interested in the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's recommendations recently crafted by an expert Predator Task Team. The Task Team was asked to identify ways and means of better coping with the influx and damage of predators such as wolves and coyotes in Ontario.

Created in response to an Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency resolution, the Task Team recognized that the growth of the sheep industry in Ontario and the profitability of other livestock farms is being limited by the impacts of predation.

The resolution said consumer demand for lamb is increasing in Ontario, but the domestic sheep industry is able to supply less than half that consumer demand because of predation on their farms.

The law allows farmers to shoot or trap wolves and coyotes when they are threatening domestic livestock on their farms. This has not proven effective in controlling populations that feed on livestock. The recommendations conclude that snares must be permitted on farms in Southern Ontario to control predators.

However, it also recognized that skill is required to safely and effectively use traps and snares to catch and remove predators. Consequently, the recommendations also call for training for farmers.

Improved fencing is another approach members of the OFA Task Team considered. While predator-proof fencing may be deemed more acceptable, it is limited in effectiveness due to its expense and the simple fact coyotes can dig their way under or go over such fencing. Public funding will be required for such solutions.

Another possibility for protecting farm animals from predators is the use of guard dogs and other control animals. The Task Team has recommended cost share funding for such animals. However the Task Team also cautioned about recent changes to the SPCA legislation making it illegal to allow animals to fight other animals. We will need to be absolutely clear, with confirmation from the office of the Attorney General, that this provision does not pertain to the protection of domestic livestock.

There are also chemical products that can be used to eliminate predators. The Task Team has also recommended their limited to target those predators preying on livestock.

This exhaustive list of remedies, coupled with improved compensation for livestock losses, will start to address the coyote and wolf problems faced by our farmers. We trust Minister Cansfield is as receptive to our calls for assistance as she was to the call from the Beaches.

OFA and its commodity partners will continue to work with our governments in search of acceptable solutions to the predator problem.