



Overview

Thousands of animals die every year in wildlife killing contests, events where participants compete to kill the greatest number, the largest, the youngest, or the most females of a targeted species for prizes and entertainment. These contests are not monitored by state wildlife agencies and often take place on public land. Wildlife killing contests are legal in all but eight states including Arizona, California, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont, and Washington (with a possible ninth state, New York, if the governor signs legislation). In 2023, [Illinois](#), [Nevada](#), [New Jersey](#), and [Virginia](#) introduced bills to ban these contests.

Policy Options

1. Prohibit or Limit Awards and Prizes for Killing Animals:

Some states have taken comprehensive action against different types of wildlife killing contests. In 2014, [California](#) became the first and only state where it is unlawful to offer a prize or other inducement as a reward for the taking of a game bird, mammal, fish, reptile, or amphibian in an individual contest, tournament, or derby. In 2021, [Washington](#) prohibited all wildlife killing contests that allow an unlimited bag limit (the number of animals that can be killed) and capped prizes at \$2000.

2. Prohibit Contests for Certain Species: States can also take targeted action to increase protections for specific carnivore species against wildlife killing contests. Maryland [S.B.200](#) (Enacted, 2021) prohibits sponsoring, conducting, or participating in a killing contest for coyote, fox, or raccoon for prizes or monetary rewards. The state wildlife commissions in [Arizona](#) and [Massachusetts](#) both voted to ban contests targeting predator and furbearer species in 2019. New Mexico [S.B.76](#) (Enacted, 2019) and Vermont [H.636](#) (Enacted, 2018) banned coyote killing contests. The [Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission](#) voted to ban killing contests that target most furbearer species and certain small-game species in 2020.

3. Local Resolutions: Cities and counties in [Arizona](#), [New Mexico](#), [Nevada](#), [Minnesota](#), and other states have passed resolutions condemning killing contests.

KEY POINTS

- Every year, wildlife killing contests target bobcats, cougars, coyotes, crows, foxes, porcupines, prairie dogs, rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, and wolves. Most of the targeted species have few or no protections and can therefore be killed en masse with no oversight from the state's wildlife agency. ([Project Coyote](#))
- Killing contests may undermine the public's view of ethical hunting. ([The Wildlife Society](#))
As the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has stated, the contest events "could possibly jeopardize the future of hunting and affect access to private lands for all hunters."
- There is no scientific evidence that killing contests protect livestock or serve other wildlife management purposes. Indiscriminate killing may increase animals' populations and create more conflicts by disrupting species' self-regulating behaviors. ([National Geographic](#))

