



October 15, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

As veterinarians, our ethical responsibility is to advocate for the health and welfare of all animals, both domestic and wild. We are writing to express our deep concerns regarding the inhumane practices of hound hunting of mountain lions and bobcats, as well as the trapping and killing of bobcats for their fur. These practices not only cause extreme physical and psychological suffering for the targeted wildlife but also result in significant harm to the domestic dogs used in these hunts.

Hound hunting and fur trapping of mountain lions and bobcats have no place in Colorado, given their profound cruelty and lack of necessity in modern wildlife management. We strongly encourage the Colorado voter to vote “YES” on Proposition 127 on the Colorado ballot this fall to remedy this cruel and inhumane treatment of domestic dogs and Colorado’s native wild cat species.

Hound hunting involves using packs of dogs to pursue and exhaust mountain lions and bobcats. This practice is inherently stressful and cruel for both the wild animals and the dogs involved.

Dogs used in hound hunting are often subjected to intense physical strain, long hours of running over rough terrain, and the inherent dangers of confrontations with large predators. Injuries such as torn footpads, toenails, ligaments or muscles, broken bones, and deep lacerations from the claws of the mountain lions are common. Often, hounds are kept very thin and sometimes underweight, and ready for the chase. They are at risk of dehydration, hypothermia, or heat exhaustion during prolonged pursuits. When injured, some hounds are abandoned or killed without receiving the veterinary care they desperately need.

In addition to the physical toll, the psychological stress on these dogs is significant. Constant exposure to aggressive or fearful wild animals during hunts can lead to fear, anxiety, and behavioral problems, including aggression. These dogs, whose well-being is often neglected, are viewed as expendable tools rather than companion animals.

The mountain lions and bobcats targeted in these hunts are subjected to intense fear and physiological stress as well. They are chased over long distances leading to exhaustion, overexertion, increased cortisol levels, heightened anxiety, and unnecessary expenditure of energy and injuries which can result in long-term health consequences for these animals if they survive the hunt. These hunts are far from fair chase as they are outnumbered and treed by dogs wearing GPS location collars. Many mountain lions and bobcats suffer severe injuries or death due to the pursuit before the dogs can corner a cat for a trophy hunter to shoot. Female mountain lions are separated

from their dependent young—and often killed—leaving orphans to perish which is cruel and inhumane.

Being treed and cornered by a pack of aggressive dogs causes an acute stress response, which is both traumatic and inhumane. Sometimes the trophy hunter is not successful with their first shot which causes an injured cat to fall from a tree then be mauled by dogs while still alive. This type of cruelty is akin to dog fighting and would be entirely unacceptable, and illegal, for domestic dogs in any other circumstance.

The fur trapping of bobcats is an equally disturbing practice. Traps used to capture these animals—usually wire cage traps—inflict immense suffering on the bobcats, who are typically confined for extended periods without food, water, or protection from the elements.

The experience of being confined in a cage for an extended time causes profound psychological and physical stress, anxiety, and panic in bobcats. Stress-induced behaviors such as slamming into the caging, biting and clawing the cage, and fracturing teeth, jaws, claws, or digits during frantic attempts to escape are common. Trapped animals often exhibit elevated cortisol levels, which is indicative of severe physiological stress. Furthermore, bobcats can suffer from frostbite, dehydration, capture myopathy, and other health issues while trapped.

The methods used to kill trapped bobcats are frequently cruel and outdated. Common killing techniques include bludgeoning and strangulation. These methods cause intense suffering and prolonged, painful deaths. Bludgeoning results in facial and skull fractures in which multiple, repeated blows over an extended period would be necessary before the bobcat loses consciousness, leading to a prolonged and painful death as the animal experiences extreme distress, fear and pain. Strangulation, likewise, causes a slow and painful death as the animal suffocates, struggling for breath over an extended period.

In our professional opinion, the practices of hound hunting and fur trapping represent gross violations of humane treatment principles and ethical standards that should govern our interactions with wildlife. The physical injuries, psychological stress, and cruelty endured by both the hounds and the wild animals are inconsistent with the values of compassion and respect for life that guide the veterinary profession. We urge the voter to vote “YES” on Proposition 127 to protect Colorado’s mountain lions, bobcats, and domestic dogs from cruelty resulting in injury and death perpetuated by hound hunting and fur trapping.

Sincerely,

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