

Grisly Nevada wildlife killing contests exposed

An investigator with the Humane Society of the United States captured the results of a senseless massacre of coyotes, highlighting the need for a state ban



Cold Springs Station Overnight Coyote Derby



The 9th Annual Coyote Ball

IN JANUARY, 2023, participants in two killing contests in Nevada gunned down coyotes for the chance at cash and prizes. From Jan. 13-14, contestants in the 9th Annual Coyote Ball in Reno competed to kill the most, the largest and smallest coyotes and purchased raffle tickets for two guns. One team killed 11 coyotes, while the remaining teams killed between one and 10 coyotes. From Jan. 27-28, competitors in the Cold Springs Station Overnight Coyote Derby in Fallon shot dozens of coyotes to compete in prize categories including the greatest weight of four animals killed, biggest coyote, smallest coyote and the “lucky loser,” given to a random team with no kills. The first prize was more than \$3,000.

Most participants used powerful assault rifles like AR-15s fitted with night vision and thermal imaging scopes, along with digital calling devices, to lure animals in for an easy shot. An undercover investigator with the Humane Society of the United States attended the contest weigh-ins and documented disturbing scenes including participants dragging dead, bloody coyotes across the ground, cutting slits in the animals’ legs to hang them upside down for weighing, flinging coyotes into piles, and joking about killing animals and humans.

In similar killing contests, the animals are often dumped like trash after the contest is over.

Participants in the Reno contest told the investigator there are about 15 contests per year in Nevada. Coyotes, foxes, bobcats, raccoons, rabbits, badgers, ringtail cats and beavers have fallen victim to killing contests across the state in Pioche, Henderson, Hawthorne, Las Vegas, Battle Mountain, Caliente, Stagecoach, Midas, Golconda, Austin, Elko, Carvers, Winnemucca, Fish Lake Valley, McGill, Fallon, Tonopah, Reno, Searchlight and Panaca. Fire departments, 4-H clubs, farm bureaus, chambers of commerce, veterans’ organizations and even high schools and churches have hosted or organized these events across the country.

Wildlife killing contests are cruel, violate traditional hunting ethics and are counterproductive to sound wildlife management. The contests can orphan dependent young, who are left to die from starvation, predation or exposure. The events serve no legitimate wildlife management function—they do not reduce coyote numbers, prevent conflicts with farm animals or boost populations of game species like deer.

For more information, contact wildlife@humanesociety.org.

All photos by the HSUS.

Coyotes are native to Nevada, and as a top carnivore they provide vital ecosystem balance. Left alone, coyotes regulate their own numbers based on available habitat and food sources, and conflicts can be avoided using [nonlethal](#) deterrence techniques.

Hunters and wildlife management professionals in Nevada and across the country have [condemned killing contests](#) as unsporting, unscientific and a threat to the reputation of hunters and the future of hunting. Tony Wasley, former director of the Nevada Department of Wildlife, said: “Killing contests are ethically upsetting for most members of society. Hunting should not be a competition as such behavior ultimately degrades the value of life and undermines respect for the animals being hunted.”

Key investigative findings

“Cold Springs Station Overnight Coyote Derby”

Cold Springs Station, Fallon, Nevada

Jan. 27-28, 2023

- Participants competed in categories for the greatest weight of four animals killed, biggest coyote, smallest coyote and the “lucky loser,” given to a random team with no kills. The largest prize was more than \$3,000 for the greatest weight of kills.
- Participants cut slits in the dead coyotes’ legs to hang them upside down for weighing. To discourage cheating, they also checked the temperature of the coyote bodies to ensure they were fresh kills.
- Participants dragged coyote bodies along the ground and flung them into trucks. The pavement was soaked in blood.
- Around 60 coyotes were piled onto a truck bed. A participant said he killed three coyotes but was not able to retrieve the bodies because they were in deep mud.
- When asked why he participates in killing contests, one competitor said: “Being able to shoot as many as I f***** want. And kill s***. The itch to kill something. Better than people.”
- A participant told the investigator that he shot a coyote from his truck during the competition.
- One participant said he used a thermal imaging scope to kill a coyote who was just 12 pounds. He called it a “coyweenie” and said it was “a f***** itty-bitty son of a bitch.” He said the coyote was “right underneath him” and “looking right at” him.



He smiled and imitated shooting a coyote at very close range. He said, “it was like shooting a f***** weenie dog.”

- Two participants told the investigator that killing animals on federal Bureau of Land Management land is a regular occurrence during these contests. During this contest, the investigator witnessed one competitor looking for coyotes on BLM land.

**“The 9th Annual Coyote Ball
Wayside Bar, Reno, Nevada
Jan. 13-14, 2023**

- 32 teams competed to kill the most, the largest and the smallest coyotes and purchased raffle tickets for two guns. The winning team killed 11 coyotes.
- Though the contest rules stated that the contest did not have a BLM Special Recreation Permit, several participants admitted that they would be (illegally) killing on BLM lands.
- Participants told the investigator that they use night vision and thermal imaging scopes to kill the animals. They drive from location to location, using electronic calling devices that mimic the sounds of coyote pups or prey in distress, to lure animals near the truck. If coyotes don't show up, they drive to the next spot.
- Coyotes were hung upside down from scales to be weighed and then thrown into the backs of pickup trucks. The animals were covered in blood, and most had a shot to the torso.
- The coyotes' blood ran along a gutter, causing one person to exclaim, “The blood will flow!”
- A contestant told the investigator that he would “kill every f***** congressman and senator in office” over a new law that will require a certain type of gun stock to be registered.

Nevada residents should [contact their state senator and state assemblymember](#) and urge them to support [AB102](#), the bill to ban wildlife killing contests in the state.

