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URBAN COYOTES: A STATES' PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The author summarizes the information presented and discussed during the Urban Coyote Symposium from a state wildlife agency's perspective. He notes the need to consider such management challenges not only from a biological, but also from a human dimensions perspective.

Key words: *Canis latrans*, coyote, urban coyotes, wildlife management

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The adaptability of coyotes (*Canis latrans*) is one thing I believe we can all agree upon. We need to be adaptable as well. Techniques available to us, the behavior of coyotes, and political influences will continue to change over time. We need to be able to quickly adjust to these changes as well.

All involved in coyote management need to cooperate with one another. The Federal agencies, State agencies, local governments, and private industry all can benefit from positive interactions with each other. Each has its place in coyote management. One entity will not, and cannot, handle urban coyote management alone. Formats such as this conference go a long ways to facilitating interaction.

It would be very useful over the long term for all of us to collect uniform data for later analysis.

Based on the information presented at this conference it is clear that we are talking about the management of "exceptions". Urban coyote problems usually are the result of a coyote that is an "exception" to the normal behavior of coyotes in urban areas. And of course, there are the human "exceptions" that feed coyotes or even try to kiss them. As wildlife professionals, we are used to management of the "norms" overall population management for animals and general education of the masses for the public. This shift in focus adds to the difficulty of urban coyote management.

How should we manage the coyote exceptions? We need to have the tools available. Laws and regulations vary greatly from state to state. The legal tools available in New York are very different from what is legal in Massachusetts, which is very different from what is legal in Montana. The tools available should not necessarily be just what are available to fur trappers due to the public safety implications. We need more research on these "exception" coyotes. Why do coyotes become "exceptions"? Can "exception" coyotes be predicted? Answering these questions will not be an easy task.

How should we manage these human exceptions? How can we manage for people who do stupid things? How can we manage for people who have different value systems, which "require" them to feed coyotes? Dealing with such things can be very difficult for those of us in the wildlife management profession. As we learned in the first day of this conference from Ben

West, with his presentation on "Personalities in the Wildlife Damage Community: Are We Our Own Worst Enemies?", the majority of us in this profession have personality traits which make us appear to the general public as uncaring and arrogant. I have no doubt, especially the older I become, that I certainly can appear uncaring and arrogant. Usually when I mention to a homeowner that their cherished toy poodle is nothing more that meat on a leash to a coyote. This is where the folks working in Human Dimensions can help the "uncaring and arrogant". Through research and outreach perhaps we can better manage the human "exception" side of the equation.

We cannot discount the importance of local government in the management of urban coyotes. Without community involvement, it is very difficult to resolve a problem when access is limited to a ¼-acre back yard. We have found with the New York Suburban Coyote Study that the majority of people that have a problem, or who are seeking more information, go to a local government agency first. State and Federal agencies need to work more closely with local governments on this issue.

Lastly, I would like to mention the importance of the private sector. As much as State and Federal agencies would like to be directly involved in all problem resolutions, the real world says differently. The private sector steps in where the government leaves off. A private business is a completely different beast from government. The almighty dollar is the mother of invention. I feel the greatest opportunity for innovation of techniques lies with the private nuisance control businesses. Government and the private sector should not look at each other as competitors. Indeed, we should be looking at each other as mutual resources.