December 1977

Coydogs in Nebraska

Brian R. Mahan
School of Life Sciences, University of Nebraska - Lincoln

COYDOGS IN NEBRASKA*

by

Brian R. Mahan
School of Life Sciences
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska 68588

Skulls of 44 suspected coyote (Canis latrans) x dog (C. familiaris) hybrids, "coydogs" were collected in Nebraska from September 1975 through April 1976. Each skull was compared statistically with skulls of known coyotes, dogs, coydogs, gray wolves (C. lupus), and red wolves (C. rufus) for identification. Thirty-two males were identified as: 5 coyotes, 2 dogs, 25 coydogs; 12 females were identified as: 4 coyotes, 2 dogs, 6 coydogs. Three concentrations of hybrids were located in southeastern Nebraska.

Twelve male coydogs weighed an average 16.2 kg (35.6 lbs.); 3 female hybrids averaged 10.7 kg (23.5 lbs.). Coloration noted among hybrids collected was: 7 black; 4 rufous; 2 typical coyote-like gray; 18 intermediate in color.

Stomachs of 12 coydogs and 16 coyotes collected during the study in southeastern Nebraska were examined and contents compared. Nine coydog and 15 coyote stomachs contained food. Domestic livestock occurred in 8 of the 9 hybrid stomachs and comprised the bulk of material eaten. Only 4 of the 15 coyote stomachs contained livestock remains which made up less than one-fourth of the total weight. Rabbits, rodents and other wild mammals were found in 12 coyote stomachs and only 3 hybrid stomachs. A greater diversity of wild mammals and birds occurred in the coyote stomachs.

The differences may be due to two reasons: 1) Coyotes are better "mousers" while hybrids are more likely to feed on livestock carrion. 2) The generally larger coydogs may take larger prey. A legitimate conclusion regarding body size cannot be made because of the small sample.

---

*Data abstraced from the following papers:

Mahan, B. R., P. S. Gipson, and R. M. Case. In press. Characteristics and distribution of coyote x dog hybrids collected in Nebraska. Amer. Midland Nat.

Mahan, B. R. In press. Comparison of coyote and coyote x dog hybrid food habits in southeastern Nebraska. Prairie Nat.