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## Veterinary Community Can Help End Coyote and Fox Penning

February 8, 2011

Coyote and fox penning is an [underground hobby](#) in which dozens of dogs compete in a fenced-in area to chase—and sometimes rip apart—foxes and coyotes. There are several factors which make this sport, practiced primarily in the Southeast and some Midwestern states, brutally inhumane.

First, the coyotes and foxes are live trapped, usually with steel jaw leg hold traps which can cause immense pain and injury to the animals. Then they are transported in a cage, often with no food or water, to be sold for penning. The transport is extremely stressful for wild animals and can involve substantial distances, as some trappers will sell the animals across state lines. Finally, when the stressed and often injured animals are released into the pen, they are forced to run for their lives inside fences where there is often no hope of getting away. Dogs can overcome and kill animals exhausted from the chase, leading to a constant demand to restock enclosures with more wildlife.

### Issues of concern to the veterinary community

In addition to the inhumane nature of this sport, there are animal health issues that should present a concern to the veterinary community. For example, studies have found that transporting live, wild animals for penning has directly led to the spread of rabies and other diseases dangerous to other animals and people. The fact that these animals are stressed from capture and transport [exacerbates this problem](#).

Veterinary professionals can make a difference by speaking out against this cruel practice, since the public and government officials look to the profession for guidance on issues involving animal health and welfare. As an example, 12 Indiana veterinarians joined with HSVMA in November to [submit a letter](#)

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[of opposition](#) to the Indiana Natural Resources Commission regarding a proposed rule to regulate coyote and fox pens in the state.

Although the commission did not disallow the practice, they did vote to pursue a moratorium on new pens after January 2012. In a follow-up to this decision, two Indiana legislators introduced legislation in early 2011 which would ban the practice outright in the state. The Indiana bill, H.B. 1135, would follow on the heels of a successful ban on coyote and fox penning that was just enacted in Florida in September. The Florida ban, enacted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, was partially prompted by outrage among neighbors of the pen who witnessed coyotes attacked by dogs against the pen's fences.

## How you can help

Legislation to ban coyote and fox penning has already been introduced in Indiana ([H.B. 1135](#)) and South Carolina (S.B. 253) during 2011. North Carolina is another state with substantial fox penning activity, and we are urging legislators there to take action against this cruel activity. If you are a veterinary professional licensed in one of these states and are interested in supporting this effort, please [contact us](#).

Veterinarians with expertise in wildlife care can also assist with this campaign, regardless of the state of licensure. Again, please [let us know](#) if you would like to help.

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