



Predator-Prey Dynamics Committee

March 24, 2024

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SUBJECT: H4BC ENDORSEMENT OF SCENT HOUNDS FOR PREDATOR MANAGEMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Purpose: The objective of this communication is to advocate for the continued and regulated use of scent hounds in predator management practices within British Columbia, based on scientific principles and legal frameworks.

Background: Throughout history, the relationship between humans and dogs in hunting has evolved into a refined practice. In British Columbia, modern houndsmen and women utilize scent hounds in predator management, particularly in pursuit of cougars. However, recent efforts by various activist groups have sought to prohibit this traditional practice, citing concerns such as trophy hunting and unfair chase tactics.

Data: Our stance is rooted in data-driven insights derived from provincial government statistics and research. Specifically, we have analyzed cougar harvest data from 2012 to 2021 (Prov of BC 2024) and found that during an average year:

- There were 1,840 resident and non-resident cougar hunters,
- 325 cougars were harvested,
- Hunting is mainly directed towards male animals, which results in reduced male abundance and average age (Mowat *et al.*, 2023); 68% of the cougars harvested were male, 30% were female, and 2% were unknown sex.

Cougars in BC are expanding their range towards the north from their historical range in the southern part of the province. Currently, their population is estimated to be between 5,000 and 7,000 animals according to a report published by Mowat *et al.* (2023).

Discussion: The utilization of scent hounds in predator management is not only lawful but also essential for maintaining ecological balance. Contrary to misconceptions propagated by activists, this method enables selective harvesting, contributes to wildlife conservation efforts, and aids in ungulate recovery programs. Moreover, the integration of technology, such as GPS tracking collars, enhances safety for both hunters and dogs and reduces overall pursuit time.

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Recommendations: To further enhance transparency and data collection, we propose implementing mandatory harvest questionnaires for cougar hunters. Additionally, we advocate for the adoption of accurate inventory methods to facilitate informed decision-making by wildlife managers.

In conclusion, our committee stands in support of the sustainable and science-based use of scent hounds in predator management practices. By aligning with wildlife managers and upholding regulatory compliance, we aim to ensure the preservation of British Columbia's diverse ecosystems while respecting traditional hunting practices.

References:

Province of British Columbia (Prov of BC). 2024. Big Game Harvest Statistics 1976 to Current.

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