

Coyotes in the Community

Coyotes, like other wild animals, sometimes come into conflict with humans.

Since migrating to Ontario from the west over 100 years ago, coyotes have adapted well to urban environments and can now be found in both rural and urban settings. Changes in land use, agricultural practices, weather and natural food shortages may contribute to increased coyote sightings in your community.

Responsibility for managing problem wildlife on properties

- Landowners are responsible for managing problem animals on their property. For example, if there are coyote problems on municipal property it is the municipality's responsibility to deal with them.
- The Ministry of Natural Resources helps landowners and municipalities deal with problem wildlife by providing fact sheets, appropriate agency and animal control services referrals, and information necessary to obtain authorizations where required.
- The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act sets out the legal actions property owners can take to deal with problem wildlife. Generally, landowners or their agents may capture, kill, or harass problem wildlife to prevent damage to their property. There is no closed season for coyotes in the majority of southern Ontario.



Changes in land use, agricultural practices, weather and natural food shortages may contribute to increased coyote sightings in your community.

Homeowners can take steps to ensure coyotes aren't attracted to their property and to keep their pets safe. To reduce the potential for coyote encounters, the Ministry of Natural Resources has these tips for the public.

Do not approach or feed coyotes

- Coyotes are usually wary of humans and avoid people whenever possible. However, they are wild animals and should not be approached.
- People should NOT feed coyotes. Feeding them makes the animals less fearful of humans and habituates them to foods provided by humans.
- Aggressive behaviour towards people is unusual for coyotes, but people should always exercise caution around wildlife.

If you encounter a coyote

- Never attempt to "tame" a coyote.
- Do not turn your back on, or run from, a coyote. Back away from the coyote while remaining calm.
- Use whistles and personal alarm devices to frighten an approaching or threatening animal.

Secure garbage and minimize attractants on your property

- Properly store and maintain garbage containers to help prevent coyotes and other animals from becoming a problem.
- Place trash bins inside an enclosed structure to discourage the presence of small rodents, which are an important food source for coyotes.
- Put garbage at curbside the morning of the scheduled pickup, rather than the night before.
- Use enclosed composting bins rather than exposed piles. Coyotes are attracted to dog or cat waste as well as products containing meat, milk and eggs.
- Pick ripe fruit from fruit trees and remove fallen fruit from the ground and keep bird feeders from overflowing as coyotes are fond of fruit, nuts and seeds.
- Protect vegetable gardens with heavy-duty garden fences or place vegetable plants in a greenhouse. Check with your local nursery to see what deterrent products are available.
- Consider eliminating artificial water sources such as koi ponds.
- Keep pet food indoors.

Use deterrents and fences can keep coyotes away from your home and gardens

- Use motion-sensitive lighting to make your property less attractive to coyotes and other nocturnal wildlife.
- Fence your property or yard. It is recommended the fence be at least six feet tall with the bottom extending at least six inches below the ground and/or a foot outward. A roller system that can be attached to the top of the fence preventing animals from gaining the foothold they need to pull themselves up and over the top of a fence.
- Electric fencing can also help deter coyotes from properties or gardens in some circumstances.
- Clear away bushes and dense weeds near your home where coyotes may find cover and small animals to feed upon.
- Close off crawl spaces under porches, decks and sheds. Coyotes use such areas for denning and raising young.

Keep all pets on leashes or confined to a yard

Cats and small dogs may be seen as prey by coyotes, while larger dogs may be injured in a confrontation. To avoid these situations consider the following:

- Install proper fencing (see above).
- As coyotes are primarily nocturnal, animals should be kept inside at night.

- Keep cats indoors and do not allow pets to roam from home.
- Walk your dog on a leash at all times. If your yard does not have a fence, use a leash while on your property to keep your dog close to you.
- Spay or neuter your dogs. Coyotes are attracted to, and can mate with, domestic dogs that have not been spayed or neutered.

Prevent predation on livestock

- Barns or sheds can provide effective protection from coyote predation for livestock that bed inside or nearby at night.
- Guard animals, such as donkeys, llamas and dogs can be a cost-effective way to protect livestock from coyotes. Guard animals will develop a bond with livestock if they are slowly integrated and will aggressively repel predators.
- For more information on preventing livestock predation, please visit the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) website at www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/sheep/predator.html.

LEARN MORE

- [Get information on the biology and behaviour of the coyote](#)
- To learn more about coyotes, including how to deal with coyote problems, [call the Ministry of Natural Resources office that serves your area](#). If the coyote poses an immediate threat or danger to public safety, call 911.

Related Links

- [Coyote Biology and Behaviour](#)
- [Strategy for Preventing and Managing Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Ontario](#) (PDF, 66 kb)
- [Living with Wolves](#)



Coyote Biology and Behaviour

General biology

The coyote found throughout much of Ontario, is a hybrid between the smaller western coyote and the eastern wolf. Adult females weigh an average of 13 to 16 kilograms (kg), while adult males usually range between 16 to 18 kg. The size and weight of coyotes are often over-estimated because of their thick coats and bushy tails.

In protected areas coyotes can live eight to 12 years, but in areas where they are hunted, or in populated areas like southern Ontario where vehicle collisions are common, the average life expectancy is less than five years.

The coyote's basic social unit is a mated pair, and coyote pairs will often mate for life. Coyotes are territorial and territories are generally exclusive of other breeding coyotes. Territory size can range from a few square kilometres where food is abundant to over a hundred where prey is very scarce.

The availability of food affects what coyotes eat, the size of their territory and populations, reproduction and survival rates. It also affects when pups leave their parents and how far they will travel to establish their own territories.

Life cycle

Mated pairs usually breed in February, with pups born in April or May. Litters average five or six pups, but can range from two to 10. Both parents share pup-rearing duties, and begin to teach the pups hunting skills when the pups are about eight to 10 weeks old.

Juveniles usually leave their parents' territory during their first autumn or winter to establish their own territory. "Packs" of coyotes are generally an adult breeding pair and their pups from the most recent litter.

Diet

Coyotes are opportunistic feeders and will consume a variety of foods, including meat, carrion (dead animals), fruits and vegetable matter. In winter, their diet consists mainly of rabbits, hares and deer when deep snow restricts the deer's mobility. In spring, summer and fall, coyotes prey mainly on small mammals (rodents, rabbits, mice and voles) and eat wild berries, birds, amphibians, grasshoppers, and deer fawns.

Because their diet consists mainly of small rodents, coyotes can be very beneficial in controlling pests that may cause damage to crops and orchards. However, livestock such as sheep, lambs and calves can also be prey to coyotes.

Habitat

Coyotes are highly adaptable. They are most commonly associated with open, agricultural landscapes interspersed with woodlots and other brushy terrain. However, they also inhabit green spaces and industrial areas within cities.

Populations

Coyote populations normally fluctuate in response to the abundance or scarcity of food. When food supplies are limited, they experience higher mortality rates and lower reproduction rates. Only 20 to 50 per cent of pups survive their first year. Humans account for most coyote deaths through hunting, trapping and motor-vehicle accidents.

Impact of Harvesting on Populations

Within each territory, one breeding pair of coyotes produces a single litter of pups each year. These breeding males and females tend to have relatively high survival rates because of their familiarity with their territory and their reduced tendency to "take risks".

Most harvested coyotes are juveniles that have left their parents' territories and are looking for their own territory and mate. Harvest by humans does little to disrupt breeding or reduce coyote numbers from one year to the next. Without a territory, most of the juvenile coyotes harvested would likely have died of other causes in a relatively short period of time anyway.

Behaviour

Since migrating to Ontario more than 100 years ago, the coyote has adapted well to both rural and urban environments. The eastern coyote is now an integral and permanent part of our diverse landscape, and performs an important role as a top predator in southern Ontario where most other large predators, such as bears and wolves, are no longer present.

Many people hear coyotes without ever seeing them because of their nighttime howls, barks, throat growls and yips. Coyotes howl to broadcast occupancy of their territory and keep members of the family group aware of each other's locations while hunting or traveling alone. Howling may also help coordinate some hunting activities.

Coyotes are usually wary of humans and avoid people whenever possible. They have adapted well to living near humans and development. In urban areas coyotes tend to be nocturnal. They typically roam at night looking for food and spend the daylight hours bedded in bushy or wooded areas. Although unusual, coyotes in urban areas may search for food during the day and may prey on small dogs and other pets from yards in residential areas and from green spaces.



Photo credit: ©gkuchera, istockphoto

It is unusual for coyotes to show no fear of humans. Coyotes displaying no fear of humans or exhibiting aggressive behaviours have likely been habituated to people through direct feeding or indirect feeding, such as leaving attractants like pet food outside near homes. In these situations, this aggressive behaviour tends to be restricted to a single animal or family group, and not the general population.

Landowner conflicts

Homeowners can take steps to avoid attracting coyotes to their property, keep their pets and livestock safe, and reduce the potential for coyote encounters. For more information on this, see [Coyotes in the Community](#).

Under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, landowners are responsible for managing problem coyotes on their property. Those actions can include harassing, capturing and releasing the animal in close proximity to the capture site, or killing it. Landowners may also use agents authorized under the Act or by the ministry to undertake these measures on their behalf. [Anyone who kills a coyote in protection of property in Wildlife Management Units 1-42, 46-50 and 53-58 must immediately report](#) it to the [local ministry office](#). Landowners should also check with their municipality regarding firearm discharge bylaws in their area.

When dealing with coyote conflicts, history shows "bounties" or "culls" are not effective. Most coyotes removed under these programs are the easy-to-catch juveniles or transient animals passing through an area, not the breeding adults that are most often the problem. In addition, programs such as "bounties" don't target the specific animals causing the conflict or problem in specific areas, but rather indiscriminately target all coyotes across a broad region. Bounties – financial incentives to hunt and trap – have been illegal in Ontario since 1972.

Municipalities and counties may say "bounties" when they actually mean paying authorized agents, under an authorization from the Ministry of Natural Resources, to kill problem coyotes. This authorization has conditions on targeting specific problem coyotes such as those that are killing livestock. These authorizations are for relatively short periods and are confined to specific geographic areas where problem coyotes have been identified.

Research also demonstrates that relocating coyotes is not a solution. Coyotes are highly mobile and territorial animals. A relocated coyote usually ends up in a conflict with an older adult, as most areas are already occupied by a dominant pair. Coyotes can also travel hundreds of kilometres to return to their original capture location. As well, relocation increases the potential for spreading disease.

Diseases

Coyote diseases or parasites can be a risk to domestic dogs but rarely to humans. Rabies is rare in coyotes in Ontario. Coyotes may actually help to reduce the incidence of rabies in Ontario since they often prey on foxes, a species more likely to carry the disease.

Mange is common in coyote populations in Ontario. Mange is caused by a parasitic mite that burrows into the outer layer of the skin, resulting in extreme irritation. It can result in the death of the animal.

LEARN MORE

- To learn more about coyotes, including how to deal with coyote problems, [call the Ministry of Natural Resources office that serves your area](#). If the coyote poses an immediate threat or danger to public safety, call 911.

Related Links

- [Coyotes in the Community](#)
- [Map Showing Area Where Killing a Wolf or Coyote in Protection of Property Must Be Reported](#)
- [Living with Wolves](#)



How to Differentiate Between Coyote and Dog Predation on Sheep

Author: OMAFRA Staff

Creation Date: 1 September
1997

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Introduction

The range and extent of predation on Ontario sheep has increased to the point where it threatens the viability of many operations. Ontario producers lost an average of 2,965 sheep and lambs/year to coyotes and wolves during the five year period from 2004 to 2009, losses which were compensated at \$427,000/year under the *Livestock, Poultry and Honeybee Protection Act*. The total losses would be substantially higher, as losses attributed to feral or domestic dogs are not included, since they are compensated by the districts or municipalities. As well, animals that are killed, but not found are not included in these figures.

Identifying the cause of death is not easy, but it can be especially difficult for inexperienced sheep producers. The purpose of this factsheet is to aid producers and livestock evaluators in

distinguishing between losses caused by predators and non-predator causes. If predation is the cause of death then it is particularly important to identify the species responsible so additional control measures can be implemented to minimize future losses. Heavy emphasis is placed on distinguishing between coyote predation and dog predation, since they collectively account for almost all predator related losses in Ontario flocks.

Predation or Scavenging

A dead sheep has been found. The first question which needs to be answered is whether the sheep was killed by a predator or whether it died of some other cause and the carcass was subsequently scavenged. The key clue to look for in distinguishing between predation and scavenging or carrion feeding is the presence of blood either at the point(s) of attack on the carcass or around the kill site. Bleeding can only occur before, and shortly after death. Bites made to a live animal will produce haemorrhaging which eventually shows as bruising under the skin. However haemorrhaging, and subsequently bruising will not occur on a dead animal which has been scavenged. In densely woolled sheep carcasses it may be necessary to skin the neck and head area in order to see tooth punctures and bruises.

Being opportunistic predators, coyotes often prefer lambs to adult sheep. Distinguishing a newborn lamb which has been killed by coyotes from a stillborn lamb which has been scavenged can be difficult. In order to do so, it must be determined whether the lamb breathed, drank or walked before it was eaten. Alberta Agriculture recommends looking for the following clues:

1. Did the lamb walk? The soft membrane covering the sole of the hoof wears off quickly when the lamb begins to walk. If the membrane is still intact odds are that the lamb was stillborn.
2. Did the newborn lamb breathe? If the animal has breathed the lungs will be pink and feel light and spongy and will float in water. The lungs of a stillborn lamb will be a dark purplish-red colour and will sink when placed in water.
3. Did the lamb nurse? The presence of milk in the stomach is also evidence of a live birth.

If scavengers are given adequate time and opportunity to feed on the carcass, it will be virtually impossible to differentiate between predation and scavenging on an animal's carcass that died from some other cause.

Producers should also search the area where the carcass was found, for other evidence which may explain the cause of the loss. Finding predator tracks, hair or droppings near a carcass may support the theory of predation, but these findings on their own do not automatically mean that predation has occurred, as predators do often scavenge carcasses. Signs of a struggle, drag marks on the ground, broken vegetation and/or blood around the site are all

strong evidence of predation. Another possible indicator of a predator attack is if the flock appears somewhat more nervous and vocal than normal.

Was It a Coyote or a Dog?

Based on the above criteria the producer has concluded that predation is the likely cause of death. But what species of predator was responsible? Fortunately each species of predator has its own predatory habits and feeding characteristics. Undoubtedly there will be some exceptions but the following guidelines should better enable individuals to distinguish between losses caused by the most significant Ontario predators, coyotes and dogs.

Time of Attack

Coyotes normally hunt at night but also have been known to kill in the early morning hours. Dogs on the other hand will attack at any time during the day or night.

Duration of Attack

Coyote attacks do not generally last very long as they are quick and competent killers. Dog attacks on the other hand tend to be longer and more drawn out as they are generally inefficient predators.

Temperament of Flock

The behaviour of the flock after an attack can be important in determining the species of predator. Since coyotes kill principally for survival, their attacks are usually quick and focused on a small number of sheep. After a kill, coyotes will eat their prey and leave the rest of the flock alone. Consequently a flock witnessing a coyote kill will not normally appear as spooked, stressed or noisy as those suffering a dog attack. After a dog attack the flock is more apt to be nervous and confused because the attack lasts longer, involves more chasing and harassing and usually involves several dogs attacking numerous sheep. As a result, there is normally a lot of commotion and confusion during and after a dog attack.

The only exception to this might be during the period from July to September when the female coyote is teaching young pups to hunt. In such cases the flock may be high-strung due to the puppy's inexperienced attack techniques.

Extent of Attack or Kill

The number of sheep killed can also reveal the predator's identity. Kills in excess of two or three animals may suggest that dogs were involved. Dogs normally attack sheep for fun, rather than food, thus their harassment frequently leads to indiscriminate mutilation. Being

relatively poor killers, dogs tend to chase sheep extensively and as a result more sheep are attacked, injured or killed over a wider area than in coyote attacks.

Dog attacks often involve more than one dog whereas coyotes normally hunt alone and like most wild predators they tend to kill only what they need to survive. Usually only one or two sheep will be killed with very few sheep injured. Again the possible exception is in the late summer and early fall when the pups are accompanying the adults.

Location of Attack or Carcasses

If coyotes are responsible then the carcasses are likely to be found relatively close together, near areas with plenty of cover which provides an easy escape. Carcasses resulting from dog attacks will on the other hand tend to be scattered throughout the pasture as the sheep panic to escape.

Target Animals

Being efficient predators, coyotes will generally target the smallest, slowest and most vulnerable animals, which most often includes lambs. Dogs tend to be non-selective and will attack sheep of any age.

Attacking Behaviour

A thorough examination of the carcass or injured animal will provide key clues to narrow the predator's identity. To kill as quickly as possible, coyotes typically attack by biting sheep in the throat just behind the jaw and under the ears. They maintain a grip until the animal suffocates or dies of internal bleeding. The external puncture wounds in the throat may be difficult to see. Internal wounds will generally be a rupture of the larynx and severe subcutaneous trauma and bleeding. Coyotes seldom inflict injuries to other parts of the adult animal or carcass. Lambs will likely have bites to the head, neck and back causing extensive bone and tissue damage.

In late summer or early fall when the female coyote is teaching pups to hunt, some unusual wounds may result from the pups' inexperienced hunting techniques. At this time, bites and rips to different body areas are common. In such cases more than one sheep of a flock can be injured. However, if coyotes are the culprit, one clean kill should have occurred.

Wounds to numerous live sheep on body areas other than the head or neck are signs of dog predation. Dogs usually attack from the side or rear inflicting non-fatal wounds on various parts of the body. Frequently the skin and muscles in the flank, hindquarters and head will be ripped. Neck wounds will be superficial or severe lacerations, unlike the characteristic puncture wounds left by the teeth of a coyote. Lambs killed by dogs will have a slashed and

ripped appearance. Clumps of wool lying spread around the attack area likely suggest an inefficient dog attack.

Feeding Behaviour

Coyotes generally eat their kill. They start feeding in the abdominal cavity, eating the kidney, liver and lungs. The stomach and intestines are usually pulled out, but are not normally eaten, other than the surrounding fatty tissues. After the organs have been eaten the coyote will feed on the muscle tissue of the rear quarters or the rib cage and shoulder. Reliable signs of coyote feeding include muscle tissue with ragged edges and splintered and chewn ribs. Coyotes will often rub and roll in the carcass remains then may defecate after feeding. Coyotes generally do not scatter the wool or hide around the site.

Odds are if lambs go missing, coyotes are the probable predator. Coyotes will often take smaller prey back to its den, especially during May and June when feeding its pups.

It is rare that dogs will either remove or feed on a kill. They may however chew on various parts of the carcass. If the dogs do feed they will usually eat from the outside in, generally starting around the anus area, as opposed to the coyote feeding on internal organs first. Coyotes may come back to feed on the carcass while dogs seldom return to feed off kills.

Tracks at Site

Since most kills occur on pasture there is rarely distinguishable tracks left behind. However if the ground is sandy or soft from a recent rain, tracks can distinguish the presence of either coyotes or dogs. It must be stressed however that tracks alone do not confirm that animal was the killer (Figure 1). Coyote tracks are more oval shaped and the nail marks left are less prominent than those of dogs. Coyote tracks are more uniform in size while dog tracks will vary in size according to size and weight of the dog species. Coyote tracks tend to follow a straighter line and the rear tracks follow directly in line with or on top of front tracks. A dog's rear tracks are normally slightly to one side of the front tracks.

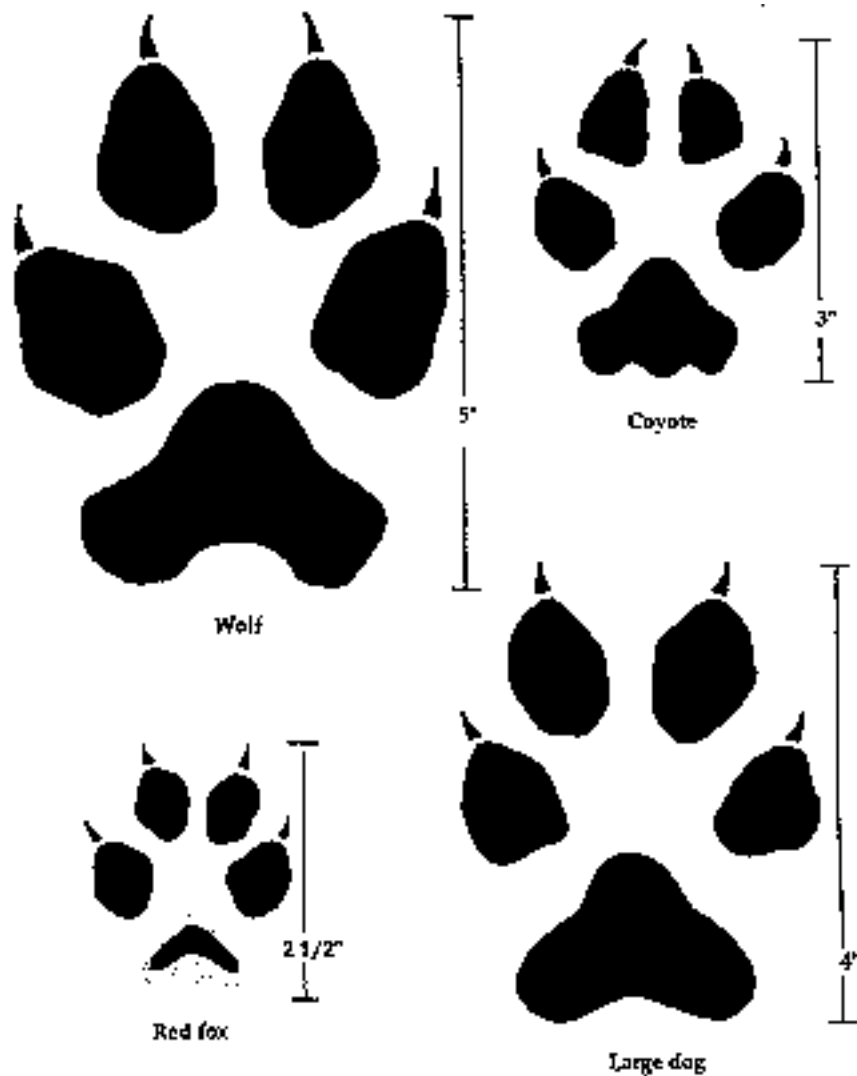


Figure 1. Animal tracks.

Droppings

Droppings found near the site can also help to differentiate between coyotes and domestic dogs. Hair and pieces of bone in the droppings would suggest either a coyote or feral dog. The droppings from a domestic dog receiving dog food will show no evidence of hair or bones. Coyote's droppings tend to be black, due largely to their consumption of blood, while domestic dog droppings will be brown.

Conclusion

In most instances a prompt and thorough examination of the carcass, the site and live animals associated with the attack will aid in determining whether the death was due to an accident, disease or predation. If predation is the cause of death then the producer must decide if the problem can be resolved by modifying farm management practices (i.e. pasturing closer to buildings, implementing night housing, improving dead animal disposal

practices ...). If losses are extensive then the producer should consider implementing other predator control practices (use of livestock guard animals, electric fences, hunting, trapping, etc.).

References

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6. Stock Predation and Predator Control - A Brief Summary of General Characteristics of Predator Kills and Response Program, M.L. Hart, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 1988
7. Understanding the Coyote, University of Kentucky, 1995

For more information:

Toll Free: 1-877-424-1300

Local: (519) 826-4047

E-mail: ag.info.omafra@ontario.ca



Welcome to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Zone J Website

Zone J includes most of South-western Ontario and has over 23,000 members. Our members participate in hunting, angling stewardship and many volunteer conservation oriented activities such as habitat enhancement, fish and wildlife monitoring, hatchery rearing operations, environmental clean ups, plantings and reintroductions like the successful wild turkey

reintroductions.

We share a rich and diversified appreciation for our natural resources, one that has been passed on to us and one that we want to share with future hunters, anglers and conservationists. .

The project work within the Zone is merely a small portion of the dedication and contribution that members of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunter's make towards protecting the heritage of our sport and enhancing the quality of life.



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Trapping... Our Naturally Renewable Heritage

Our Federation, with the support of individual trappers, along with natural resource partners and others, will promote our heritage and our future through sustainable, professional and humane fur management practices.

Our Mission

To promote the conservation and sustainability of fur bearers and the eco-system.

1. To promote the general welfare of the trappers of Ontario.
2. To promote the humane harvest of fur bearers on a continual basis.
3. To promote and participate in the continuing education of fur harvesters.
4. To promote and participate in public education and awareness.
5. To represent the trappers of Ontario in any and all resource management issues.

Managing Ontario's Furbearers for today and tomorrow.

To Locate a licensed trapper in your area,
There are several ways to reach us!

Phone / Fax

Telephone: (705) 254-3338

Fax: (705) 254-3297

Email

furman@furmanagers.com

Mailing Address

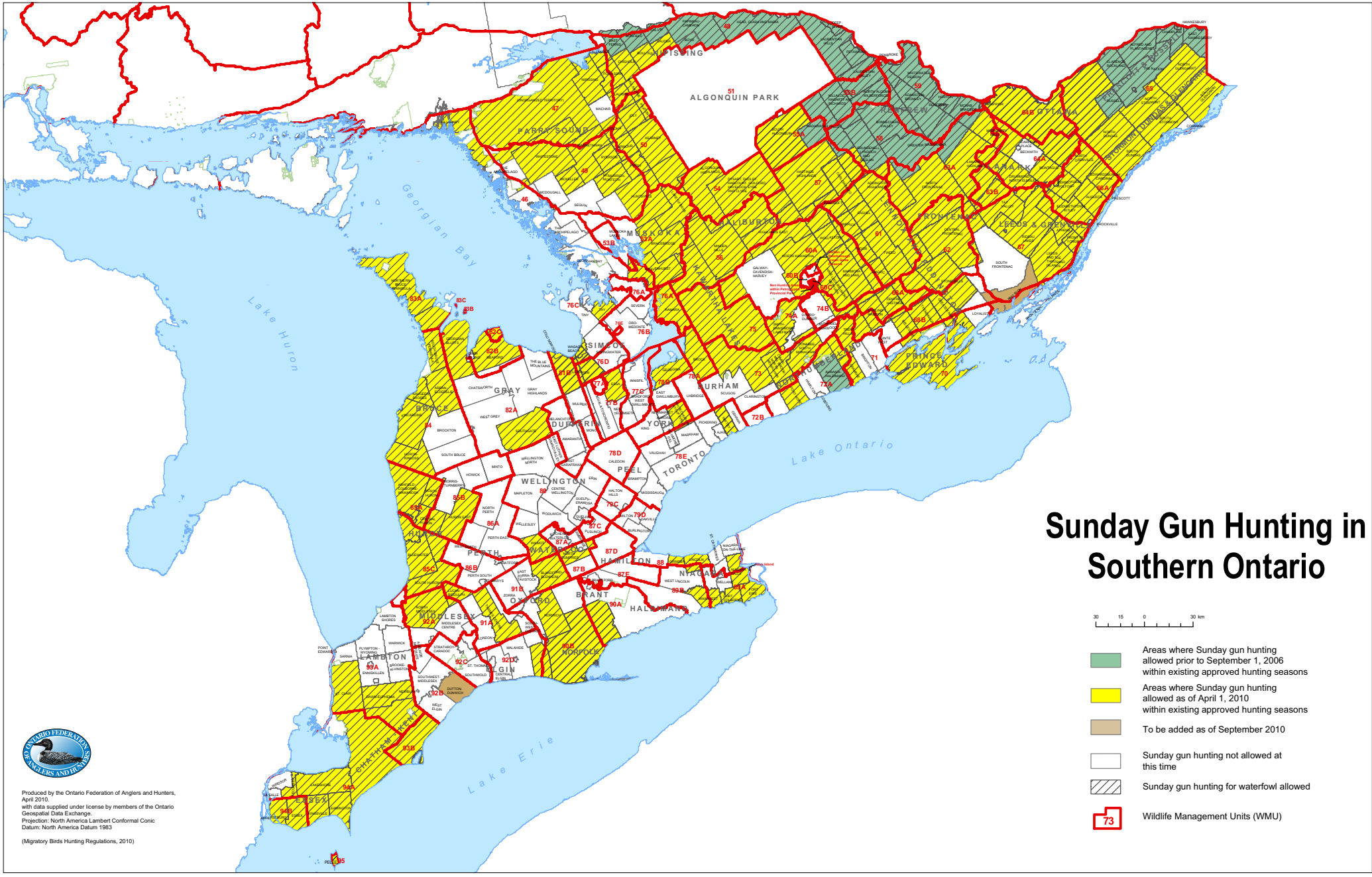
Ontario Fur Managers Federation
531 Second Line E
Sault Ste Marie, ON, P6B 4K2

Submitted by Robert Gurney

trapperrob01@yahoo.ca

Home (519)-770-3377

Cell (519)-770-6866



Sunday Gun Hunting in Southern Ontario

- Areas where Sunday gun hunting allowed prior to September 1, 2006 within existing approved hunting seasons
- Areas where Sunday gun hunting allowed as of April 1, 2010 within existing approved hunting seasons
- To be added as of September 2010
- Sunday gun hunting not allowed at this time
- Sunday gun hunting for waterfowl allowed
- 73

Wildlife Management Units (WMU)



Produced by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, April 2010, with data supplied under license by members of the Ontario Geospatial Data Exchange. Projection: North America Lambert Conformal Conic Datum: North America Datum 1983 (Migratory Birds Hunting Regulations, 2010)

Province of Ontario Statistics

Wildlife Damage to Livestock Compensation Program Payments				
Fiscal Year	Wolf/Coyote Damage	Bear Damage on Livestock	Bear Damage on Beehives	Total Compensation
	# Injured/Killed	# Injured/Killed	# Bee Colonies/hives	
2002/03	3,666	135	474	\$755,502
2003/04	3,723	73	562	\$675,169
2004/05	3,558	89	363	\$594,510
2005/06	4,402	82	394	\$886,042
2006/07	4,565	51	389	\$1,009,996
2007/08	4,829	96	425	\$1,113,689
2008/09	5,964	58	472	\$1,353,625
2009/10	6,153	394	575	\$1,469,887
Total	36,860	978	3,654	\$7,858,420

Wolf/Coyote Predation Statistics - Oxford County

2003-2004	0	\$0
2004-2005	0	\$0
2005-2006	Cattle 1	\$ 500.00
	<u>Sheep 11</u>	<u>\$1425.00</u>
	12	\$1925.00
2006-2007	Cattle 3	\$1647.50
	<u>Sheep 11</u>	<u>\$1693.00</u>
	14	\$3340.50
2007-2008	Cattle 6	\$2265.00
	<u>Sheep 28</u>	<u>\$3438.50</u>
	34	\$5703.50
2008-2009	Cattle 8	\$3814.00
	<u>Sheep 15</u>	<u>\$2166.00</u>
	23	\$5980.50
2009-2010	Cattle 9	\$3946.75
	<u>Sheep 32</u>	<u>\$4600.00</u>
	41	\$8546.75