

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1282

As Amended by Senate

Title: An act relating to certain animals posing a danger to livestock or crops.

Brief Description: Authorizing landowners to kill coyotes and Columbian ground squirrels.

Sponsors: Representatives Fuhrman, Mastin, Buck, Goldsmith, Koster, Padden, Mulliken, Lambert, Crouse, Thompson, Basich, Hargrove, Sheldon, McMahan, Pelesky, Sheahan, Boldt and Elliot.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources: 2/8/95, 2/10/95 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/7/95, 79-17.

Senate Amended.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Fuhrman, Chairman; Buck, Vice Chairman; Pennington, Vice Chairman; Basich, Ranking Minority Member; Beeksma; Cairnes; Elliot; G. Fisher; Sheldon; Stevens; B. Thomas and Thompson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Regala, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen and Romero.

Staff: Linda Byers (786-7129).

Background: In Washington, a person must have a hunting license in order to hunt for wild animals.

Under current law, the owner or tenant of real property may trap or kill on that property wild animals or wild birds, other than endangered species, that are damaging crops, domestic animals, fowl, or other property. Wildlife trapped or killed under this provision remains the property of the state, and the person trapping or killing the wildlife is to notify the Department of Fish and Wildlife immediately. The department is to dispose of the wildlife within three working days of the notification.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature finds that coyotes pose a danger to livestock and that Columbian ground squirrels destroy alfalfa, grain, and other agricultural crops. The Legislature finds that a more expedient means of removal is needed for these two species.

A landowner, and landowner's lessee, and guests of the landowner or lessee may kill coyotes and Columbian ground squirrels on the landowner's property without obtaining a hunting license and without going through the usual procedure for killing wild animals that are damaging crops, domestic animals, fowl, or other property.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The underlying bill allows a landowner, a lessee, and guests to kill coyotes and Columbian ground squirrels on the landowner's property; the striking amendment amends the current law which allows an owner or tenant to trap or kill wild animals which are damaging crops, animals, or property to extend the authorization to trap or kill wild animals to the owner's immediate family members and employees. The striking amendment also specifies that coyotes and Columbian ground squirrels which are trapped or killed do not remain the property of the state and will not be disposed of by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: You should not have to have a hunting license to get rid of these animals. Coyotes will never be endangered. They have learned to adapt to many different environments. Predator control is no longer adequately funded in Washington. Coyotes do millions of dollars of damage to the cattle industry. This will help ranchers get control of a problem. A rancher has been cited for not having a license because the coyote was not in the actual act of killing the animals.

Testimony Against: There is an issue here of enforcement. We don't want to increase the opportunity for people to hunt illegally. A second issue of concern is hunter safety. Currently people have to attend the hunter education course to get their hunting license, and these people would not have the course because they would not have a license.

Testified: K.O. Rosenberg, Northeast Tri-Counties; Kent Lebsack, Washington Cattlemen's Association (both in favor); and Ed Manary, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Votes on Final Passage:

Yeas 79; Nays 17; Excused 2

Nays: Chopp, Cole, Dellwo, Dyer, G. Fisher, R. Fisher, Jacobsen, Kessler, Mason, Patterson, Regala, Romero, Rust, Thibaudeau, Valle, Voloria, Wolfe

Excused: Grant, Ogden