

Oregon voters have stated twice that they oppose the use of hounds to hunt cougars for sport, or “trophy hunting,”<sup>i</sup> because it is cruel and violates the ethics of fair chase. A majority of Oregonians passed Measure 18 in 1994, making illegal the hunting of cougars with packs of radio-collared dogs (“hounding”). An even greater majority voted in 1996 to reject a measure to repeal Measure 18. Moreover, recent polling shows that the majority of voters, 65 percent, are opposed to the trophy hunting of Oregon’s majestic cougars.<sup>ii</sup> Measure 18 exempts the use of dogs to address threats from individual cougars who threaten property or public safety, or to carry out state wildlife management objectives. Measure 18 did not ban trophy hunting of cougars in Oregon.

In fact, Oregon currently allows excessive trophy hunting of cougars and ranks fifth highest nationwide for hunting mortality of these large cats. Between 2008 and 2017, trophy hunters killed nearly 2,600 cougars.<sup>iii</sup> Oregon is one of only a few states that allow year-round hunting of cougars, even when kittens are likely dependent on their mothers.

Still, every year since 1997, some legislators have introduced a raft of bills to either weaken and/or repeal Measure 18. Multiple bills have already been introduced in the 2025 legislature that would subject Oregon’s cougar population to hounding for sport and trophies, posing an affront to the democratic process and the majority of Oregonians who want cougars and their kittens protected from such cruelty.

**Legislators should not circumvent or second-guess the voters.** In addition to bills that would outright repeal the statute, legislation has been introduced to allow counties to “opt out” of Measure 18, creating a chaotic patchwork approach to wildlife management and law enforcement. These bills set a terrible precedent. If counties are permitted to opt out of Measure 18, they may seek a way out of other voter-approved measures, rendering meaningless the state’s initiative process and damaging Oregon’s democratic institutions.

### **Hounding cougars is cruel and unnecessary**

Hounding cougars is unequivocally cruel and is not considered “fair chase” hunting because it gives the hunter too many advantages. Unfortunately, cougar kittens are too frequently mauled and killed by the pack. As well, the hounds themselves face injury or even death if the cougar turns to fight for her life. Hounds also disturb or kill non-target wildlife such as deer and elk, and they trespass onto private lands.<sup>iv</sup>

**Allowing hounding of cougars may increase conflicts with livestock and communities.** The best available science demonstrates that excessively killing cougars creates social chaos in their communities. That’s because mature adult cougars—the animals trophy hunters target—are vital in containing the immigrating young, inexperienced male cougars. Adult males protect both their females and kittens from these young males. But if the mature tom is killed, these multiple young males will try to take his place. Because they are often inexperienced hunters, they are more likely to cross paths with humans or livestock. Ironically, Oregon’s practice of indiscriminately killing large numbers of cougars through trophy hunting or predator control disrupts the animals’ social structure, ultimately leading to more conflicts with humans, pets and livestock.

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<sup>i</sup> The Humane Society of the United States defines trophy hunting as the practice of killing or pursuing with intent to kill animals to display their body parts, not primarily for subsistence.

<sup>ii</sup> Remington Research Group. Poll conducted January 2019.

<sup>iii</sup> Data received on June 28, 2018 through records request from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.