

Submitter: Patricia Wolf
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

I am opposed to this bill. The criminal punishment for killing cougars with the use of dogs should be the same throughout the state with no area within the State of Oregon exempt. The use of dogs in hunting cougars is cruel and science has shown that it leads to increased conflicts with livestock and humans.

A study was conducted in 2013 titled "Effects of Remedial Sport Hunting on Cougar Complaints and Livestock Depredations" by Kaylie A. Peebles ,Robert B. Wielgus, Benjamin T. Maletzke, Mark E. Swanson in PLOS Journal
Published: November 19, 2013 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0079713>

It found: "The odds of increased complaints and livestock depredations increased dramatically (36 to 240%) with increased cougar harvest. We suggest that increased young male immigration, social disruption of cougar populations, and associated changes in space use by cougars - caused by increased hunting resulted in the increased complaints and livestock depredations. Widespread indiscriminate hunting does not appear to be an effective preventative and remedial method for reducing predator complaints and livestock depredations."

It works like this: Female cougars have smallish overlapping territories that seem to fluctuate with prey abundance. Male cougars have larger, non-overlapping territories that encompass multiple female ones. Only large, older males are capable of holding down these territories, "and you don't get to be a 10-year-old male by attacking humans or livestock or pets." Wielgus found that those 10-year-old males were far more likely to be killed by hunters. "And we found that when you remove an older male, you have two or three teenage males come in to take their place. And those are the ones that are responsible for most bad encounters between cougars and people, as well as the majority of livestock and pet depredations." This movement of younger animals also means it can be difficult to tell if a population is declining due to overhunting or staying the same.

Oregonians have repeatedly voiced that they are overwhelmingly against the hunting of mountain lions / cougars by the use of dogs. I'd rather see communities and ranchers receive training and equipment/infrastructure reimbursement to implement non-lethal preventative measures. In cases where livestock are taken by a cougar/mountain lion after those preventative measures have been taken I would like for the state reimburse the livestock owners if they have lost livestock to a predator like a wolf, cougar, or coyote.

Cougars are a natural part of Oregon and have a right to live here, too. We have an ethical obligation to find solutions that allow humans to live more harmoniously with the native plants and animals of this region. Oregon's wild nature is truly one of the best things about this state. We must protect it and find ways live in harmony with it.