

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

As a veterinarian in Lane county, I am choosing to remain anonymous to avoid retaliation for my view. I have lived in Oregon for most of my life, and have watched the cougar situation change over several decades. I have also seen the damage cougars can do to both livestock and pets. The restrictions on hunting with dogs has had what I believe to be unintended consequences. Over the generations, cougars began to lose their fear of people and push the boundaries, and have now learned that domestic animals are easy targets. They are now passing this knowledge on to their young and their hunting methods have changed (hunting in pastures, back yard, hunting in groups, going into buildings, etc).

Their loss of fear around farms and now even homes, porches, and buildings greatly increase the risk of human attacks as well. This has left ranchers and farm owners with only one effective option with cougars that are attacking their livestock, which is to have them killed. This is not only the worst possible outcome for everyone involved (including the cougars), it is also not allowing the cougars to relearn healthy boundaries. A cougar that has to be shot for killing livestock learns nothing and teaches nothing. It is the cougars that get chased and escape that learn to avoid people, dogs, and farms. And they will subsequently teach their cubs the same lessons. It seems the most ideal situation is failed attempts to hunt them with dogs. This will push them back, showing them where they are safe, and passing that on to future generations. Hunting them will also genetically select for the ones that are best at hunting in the wild, hiding, and surviving.

Ultimately this will mean cougars have a better chance to escape, learn to avoid populated areas, and thrive in areas that keep them and everyone else safer. Although initially the number of cougars successfully hunted will probably be high (because they no longer know how to hide and stay safe), the numbers will drop as they relearn survival skills and appropriate boundaries. In turn, this will also mean safer livestock, pets, and humans.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.