

HSUS investigates the slaughter of wildlife in Texas killing contest

Undercover investigation exposes cash-and-prizes game targeting bobcats, coyotes, foxes and raccoons, underscoring need for a statewide ban on these cruel events



OVER A 21-HOUR PERIOD, from Jan. 23-24, 2021, participants in a wildlife killing contest in De Leon, Texas, gunned down approximately 60 animals for the chance at cash and prizes. Undercover investigators with the Humane Society of the United States witnessed the aftermath of the killing at the weigh-in located in a pharmacy parking lot. Participants in the De Leon Pharmacy and Sporting Goods' Varmint Hunt #1 event arrived and dragged bloody bobcats, coyotes, gray foxes and raccoons from their trucks to the weigh station. Judges awarded cash prizes for a "stringer hunt"—meaning one coyote, one fox, one bobcat and one raccoon—with the heaviest combined weight of the four animals winning first place. The \$200 entry fee for each team determined the payout for first prize. Other cash prizes were given for the heaviest coyote, heaviest bobcat, heaviest fox and heaviest raccoon.

Texas is thought to have more wildlife killing contests than any state in the country. At least 155 of these events have been held in the state since 2015, though this number is likely a gross underestimate. The events—which take place across Texas—target bobcats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, badgers, jack rabbits, mountain lions, ringtails, opossums and other species. One of the nation's largest killing contests,

the [West Texas Big Bobcat Contest](#), occurs in San Angelo every year. During the January leg of the 2021 contest, 644 teams competed for \$148,000 in prize money. The winning two-man team that killed the biggest bobcat raked in \$45,080, while another team collected \$6,440 for killing 81 foxes in 23 hours.

Fire departments, 4-H clubs, farm bureaus, chambers of commerce, veterans' organizations and even high schools and churches have hosted or organized these events across the country. Wildlife killing contests are cruel and violate traditional hunting ethics. They can orphan dependent young, who are left to die from starvation, predation or exposure, and serve no legitimate wildlife management function. Killing contests do not reduce coyote numbers, prevent conflicts with farm animals or boost populations of game species.

Key investigative findings:

- A team of three men, calling themselves "Dead-On," won the De Leon event, killing five coyotes, two bobcats, a raccoon and a fox. The team laid the animals' bodies out in front of them for a photograph.
- Contest organizers handed out more than \$3,000 in cash prizes.

- Participants unloaded dead coyotes from their pickup trucks in the parking lot of the pharmacy. An investigator noted, *“Animals had gun shots in their heads and torsos, with their organs spilling out and faces partially destroyed.”*
- Contestants told investigators they used AR-15 and other rifles to kill the animals. The guns were custom-made, some equipped with silencers and thermal and night vision scopes, which give participants an outsized advantage over the animals. The weapons destroy animals’ fur, rendering their pelts useless.
- One participant told an investigator, as he pointed to a row of bloody animals he had killed, *“I wouldn’t use something like that if you wanna save the fur.”* He used high-end, custom-built equipment (specifically, a custom-built rifle chambered in .22 Creedmoor), telling the investigator *“they’re like a .22-250 on steroids,”* explaining that the guns *“are not very fur-friendly.”* To illustrate his point, he showed the investigator a coyote, stating, *“I shot this one up here in the throat from high up and it blew out the whole bottom of his chest.”*
- Participants’ trucks were expensively outfitted with raised decks, comfortable chairs and gun mounts.
- The competitors also used electronic calling devices, which mimic the sounds of animals in distress, including cries of dependent young, to lure animals to their deaths.



Some other known Texas 2021 contests:

- West Texas Big Bobcat Contest, San Angelo, Jan. 16, Feb. 13, March 13
- 2021 North East Texas Big Bobcat Hunt, Honey Grove, Feb. 6-7
- Scurry County Predator Calling Contest, Snyder, Feb. 6-7
- Decatur Predator Hunt 2021, Decatur, March 20-21
- 18th Annual Gatesville Varmint Hunts, Gatesville, Jan. 30-31, Feb.13-14, March 13-14
- Rockne Varmint Round Up, Red Rock, March 27-28

Texas residents can contact state policymakers and urge them to ban cruel, unsporting and ecologically destructive wildlife killing contests. Policymakers in Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Vermont and Washington have already banned the events. Visit [our website](#) for more information.

Texas Wildlife Killing Contest Advertisements

Example One

Riesel Lions Club
VARMINT HUNTS
Designed by: Blackland

Registration each
Saturday 9:00 - 12:00
at: Riesel Lions Club Fairgrounds
1170 East Frederick, Riesel, TX

Jan 9TH-10TH
Feb 6TH-7TH &
Mar 6TH-7TH
3 Separate Hunts!

HEAVIEST STRINGER STYLE HUNT
PAYOUTS: 1st-3rd Place
(1 bobcat, 1 coyote, 1 fox, 1 coon) total weight
MOST ANIMALS SIDE POTS: pays 1st place per category (most bobcats, coyotes, fox & coon)

FOR MORE INFO:
(254) 498-2020
www.riesellionsclub.com
facebook.com/riesellionsclub

Entry Fee:
Main pot: \$200
Each additional side pot: \$25
Weigh-in @ 1pm

LIONS CLUB INTERNATIONAL

The advertisement features a background of a natural, wooded landscape. At the bottom, there are several realistic images of wild animals: a bobcat on the left, a coyote in the center, and a fox on the right. The text is arranged in a structured layout with various fonts and colors (green, orange, white) to highlight key information.

Example Two



4TH ANNAUL GONZALES
COUNTY CRITTER GETTER
VARMIN HUNT

4-MAN TEAM

FEBRUARY 6TH - 7TH 2021

SIGN-UP SAT, THE 6TH FROM 10AM-11:30AM

**LOCATION Old SHOW BARN IN THE INDEPENDENCE PARK, US-183
GONZALES, TEXAS**

HUNT STARTS AT 12PM SAT, AND WEIGH-IN AT 12PM SUN,

**NO LATE ENTRIES AND ANY TEAM LATE FOR WEIGH-IN
WILL BE DISQUALIFIED**

**FOR INFORMATION CALL DYLAN MILLS 830-857-5311 JIMMY
MILLS 281-796-1639 RAUL CONTRERAS 830-857-5469**

PARTICIPANTS MAY HUNT ANYWHERE IN TEXAS

For more information, contact wildlife@humansociety.org.

ALL PHOTOS BY THE HSUS

Example Three

MILLS COUNTY GENERAL STORE VARMINT HUNT

FEBRUARY, 6-7, 2021

HUNTING STARTS AT NOON THE 6TH AND WEIGH-IN IS 10:00 ON THE 7TH

ENTRY FEE: \$150 FOR MAIN CONTEST PLUS \$25 SIDE POTS

COUNTIES WITHIN CONTEST AREA INCLUDE: Mills, Bosque, Brown, Burnet, Coleman, Comanche, Coryell, Eastland, Erath, Hamilton, Lampasas, Llano, Mason, McCulloch, San Saba

PAY OUT IS 1ST-50%, 2ND-30%, 3RD-20%

IN ORDER TO WEIGH COON, TEAM MUST QUALIFY WITH ANY OF THE LISTED ANIMALS:

5 GREY FOX, 1 RED FOX, 1 COYOTE, OR 1 BOBCAT

1.) MAIN CONTEST WILL BE DETERMINED BY HEAVIEST COON	1.) MUST FOLLOW ALL COUNTY, STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS. IF YOU BREAK THE LAW IT WILL RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION.
2.) TEAMS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHOOSING WHICH ANIMALS ARE TO BE WEIGHED IN ALL POTS	2.) 4 MEMBERS TO A TEAM MAXIMUM.
3.) SIDE POTS WILL CONSIST OF THE HEAVIEST IN EACH CATEGORY; COYOTE, GREY FOX, RED FOX, BOBCAT	3.) ALL TEAM MEMBERS MUST STAY TOGETHER
4.) IN THE EVENT OF A TIE, WINNER WILL BE CHOSEN BASED ON NUMBER OF ANIMALS	4.) ALL TEAM MEMBERS MUST BE PRESENT AT WEIGH-IN
5.) FAILURE TO MAKE WEIGH-IN TIME WILL RESULT IN DISQUALIFICATION	5.) ALL ANIMALS MUST BE KILLED DURING CONTEST HOURS, NO TRAPPED, SNARED OR FROZEN ANIMALS WILL BE ALLOWED. NO MODIFYING THE WEIGHT OF ANIMALS. ANIMALS WILL BE INSPECTED
	6.) NO HUNTING OVER BAITED AREAS, NO TROLLING, NO AIRCRAFT, NO DOGS, NO NIGHT VISION, THERMAL OR INFRARED IMAGING
	7.) DECISIONS MADE BY JUDGES ARE FINAL, JUDGES WILL BE HUNTING IN THE CONTEST
	8.) LEGALLY REGISTERED SUPPRESSORS ALLOWED

TEAM NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____
PHONE: _____
SIGNATURE: _____

TEAM MEMBERS

POWERED BY BRINSON POWERSPORTS



**FEB
6-7TH
2021**

Entry \$250

MAIL IN REGISTRATION AVAILABLE
IN PERSON REGISTRATION
@ BRINSON POWERSPORTS
BY 12PM FEB 6TH

WEIGH IN FEB 7TH 10AM SHARP @ BRINSON POWERSPORTS CORSICANA
\$100 TO HEAVY 5 COYOTE STRINGER
\$50 TO EACH HEAVY BOBCAT, FOX AND COON
MAX 4 PER TEAM

*NIGHT VISION AND
THERMALS ALLOWED*

PAYOUT
1-9 TEAMS 1ST ONLY
10-15 TEAMS 1ST AND 2ND 70%/30%
16+ TEAMS 1ST 2ND 3RD 60%/30%/10%

**FOR FULL SET OF RULES AND REGISTRATION
CONTACT RICKY HIGHTOWER 903-641-5219**

[Example Five](#)

**18TH ANNUAL
GATESVILLE TX VARMINT HUNTS**

DATES

JANUARY 30TH AND 31ST 2021
FEBRUARY 13TH AND FEBRUARY 14TH 2021
MARCH 13TH AND 14TH 2021

TIMES

MAIL INS AND EARLY ENTRIES WELCOME
REGISTRATION 8:00AM – 10:00AM SATURDAY
WEIGH IN 2:00PM SUNDAY (MUST STOP HUNTING
NO LATER THEN 12:00 NOON)

PLACE

GATESVILLE CIVIC CENTER
301 VETERAN'S MEMORIAL DR GATESVILLE TX 76528

ENTRY FEES

MONTHLY HUNT

ENTRY FEE \$200.00
PAYPAL, VENMO, AND FACEBOOK PAY AVAILABLE
SIDE POTS COUNTED IN ENTRY FEE
MOST BOBCATS, MOST COYOTES,
MOST FOX, MOST ANIMALS, BIG RACCOON

GRAND SLAM SERIES FREE

MUST HUNT AT LEAST 2 HUNT
WITH SAME TEAM MEMBERS
AND BE ENTERED IN LAST HUNT
TO WIN THE BELT BUCKLES IN MARCH

POINT SYSTEM

MAX OF 5 ANIMALS PER SPECIES
(HEAD SHOTS ADD 1 POINT)
JANUARY - BOBCATS 5PTS, COYOTES 2PTS, FOX 2PTS
FEBRUARY - COYOTES 5PTS, FOX 2PTS, BOBCATS 2PTS
MARCH - FOX 5PTS, BOBCATS 2PTS, COYOTES 2PTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
TOBY SMALL (325) 247-0139, LEE ANN SMALL (254) 589-1818,
TINA ZIMMERMAN (254) 722-2308

CONTACT EMAIL

GATESVILLE.TX.VARMINTHUNTS@GMAIL.COM
PAYPAL EMAIL – LHOFFMAN41182@GMAIL.COM
PAYPAL PLEASE CHOOSE FRIENDS AND FAMILY
VENMO - @LEEANN-SMALL
FACEBOOK PAY – PLEASE CONTACT TOBY SMALL