

A bounty in the county?

Posted By DONAL O'CONNOR

Reports of increasing coyote populations in Perth County and in neighbouring areas has county council considering a bounty for taking down the animals.

Coun. Terry Seiler raised the issue at Thursday's council meeting, reporting that hunters in the Atwood area have killed 100 coyotes and that 50 to 70 have been shot by hunters in the Rostock area.

Coun. Seiler said the situation "has been bad" in Perth South as well but he did not have numbers for that part of the county. He noted that Huron County currently offers a \$50 bounty on the animals and in Grey-Bruce he bounty is \$100.

"They are getting bigger and bigger and they are getting more brazen all the time," said Coun. John VanBakel. "Unless they are kept under control there is going to be a problem." But he said he had not heard of any attacks on livestock in West Perth.

Coun. Ian Forest cautioned that council needs to be careful in how it handles the situation as there could be some public reaction in urban areas to county incentives to control the coyotes.

"To what degree do we need an incentive to make this happen?" he questioned.

CAO Bill Arthur said there is a process that has to be followed in conjunction with the Ministry of Natural Resources for bringing in a coyote control bylaw and that it also involves the lower-tier municipalities.

The ministry says there may indeed be more coyotes in Perth County than in the past but there is no way to be sure. The MNR conducts "counts" of some species, but coyotes are not one of them. To that end the MNR says it relies on anecdotal evidence such as reports from hunters or farmers and that is what the reported increase in population is based on.

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"We are hearing that there are more coyotes in Huron and Perth County," said Jolanta Kowalski, media relations for the MNR. "It's not scientific and not exact but trappers and hunters are telling us that there is an increase."

Perth County council directed staff to report back to council on control of coyotes in the county.

Following the council meeting, Coun. Seiler told reporters an Atwood man recently spotted four coyotes on the back deck of his home on a full-moon night.

There have been attacks on calves, cattle and sheep, he said.

The North Perth councillor said he feels the county should work with hunters and farmers on the problem.

Slimmer and smaller than the wolf, the male coyote weighs from nine to 23 kilograms, has an overall length of 120-150 centimetres (including a 30- to 40-centimetre tail) and stands 58 to 66 centimetres high at the shoulder. The female is usually four-fifths as large. The coyote is a remarkable runner and is capable of reaching speeds up to 64 km/h.