



Farmer wants Grimsby to allow coyote hunting

Ken Durham says they're a threat to livestock

Posted By **MONIQUE BEECH STANDARD STAFF**

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West Lincoln farmer Ken Durham keeps his dairy cows in a barn, safe from hungry coyotes.

Still, he's heard the accounts of coyotes attacking 181-kilogram calves on Mud Street just south of Grimsby.

The 68-year-old has found sheep skulls on his Thirty Road property -- even though there's no sheep around.

He hears howling at night.

"We know they're there," Durham said.

"We know they're out taking chickens from piles of chicken manure and chasing wildlife out there, whether it's a skunk or raccoon. There's just too many."

Durham wants the Town of Grimsby to do something about it.

He recently asked Grimsby town council to consider lifting a ban on discharging firearms from the south boundary (Mud Street) north to the top of the escarpment.

He's able to shoot coyotes in West Lincoln, but once they cross the road into Grimsby, they're home free, the 68-year-old dairy and cash crop farmer said.

This year, Durham and a group of farmers and hunters shot 63 coyotes in Lincoln and West Lincoln between January and March.

"We know when we hunt they go across the border between Grimsby and West Lincoln. They can turn around the field and look back.... They get to know where they're safe."

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Currently, the town's firearm bylaw, which dates back to 1976, prohibits guns from being fired within its boundaries, with a few exemptions.

One is for a property owner or someone he has appointed in writing to act as his agent to "shoot pestiferous birds or animals," but not within 150 yards of a building.

"That would prevent anybody from the urban area from shooting a firearm, but it would basically allow it up on the escarpment," said Grimsby town clerk Kathy Vout, who has received one complaint about a coyote this year.

Vout said a public meeting will likely be called to address any possible changes to the bylaw.

The bylaw may have to be clarified, Grimsby Mayor Bob Bentley said.

Bentley said wild dogs, coyotes, foxes and cross-breeds can all be found on the escarpment.

"If we were to go ahead and create a bylaw that it's fair game to shoot certain things, without really understanding the DNA of the creatures that are stirring up there, I don't know that we could do that effectively," Bentley said.

Town staff are looking at the bylaw and consulting with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture, he said.

Bill Murch, a spokesman for the MNR, said it's up to the town to determine what to do with its bylaw.

Various municipalities in Ontario have different rules when it comes to firing a gun, Murch said.

This isn't the first time coyotes, or what could be wild dogs or a cross of the two species, has been an issue in Grimsby.

In 2004, council hired a wildlife control company to recommend how to discourage coyotes from wandering into town after 12 to 16 of the animals were spotted roaming town streets.

Bill Dowd of Humane Wildlife Control in Hamilton, who made the recommendations, said there's several non-lethal ways of handling a coyote problem, such as getting rid of road kill and taking extra care in cleaning up park areas.

Dowd said people in rural areas, outside urban boundaries, are within their rights to protect their properties.

"I think every situation is unique why they want to shoot their animal. Is it coming around their property? Is it killing livestock?"

Coyotes became a problem in Grimsby, in part, after a surge of development that left behind piles

of dirt and cut trees that attracted field mice and brought coyotes into town, Dowd said.

Last year, Niagara farmers made 88 claims to the province for compensation as a result of 123 animals killed or injured by predators like coyotes, according to provincial statistics.

The province handed out about \$18,000 in compensation last year, up from \$16,000 in 2006 for 63 claims and 103 animals injured or killed.

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