

25 June, 2014



Mr. Sonke Mastrup  
Executive Director, California Fish and Game Commission

Dear Director Mastrup,

This letter is in response to the discussion on predator contests that occurred at the 4 June, 2014, Commission meeting. As stated by April Wakeman at that meeting, the San Diego County Wildlife Federation supports the regulatory change in contest hunting presented at that meeting, with the caveat that “inducement” needs to be better defined. Furthermore, we support efforts to ban “killing contests”. However, we fear that the attempt to further change regulations will impact contests that we consider ethical. One idea that has been mentioned is to ban all contests.

We believe it is important to distinguish contests based on the number of animals killed from contests in which the goal is to take the most desirable animal. Probably the best examples are “big buck” contests often held by local general stores or sporting goods stores. Hunters generally only have one tag, so the “inducement” of the contest does not result in any additional animals being killed. The major impact is that a hunter will make a conscious effort to take an older buck. This is actually good game management, since it culls the herd of an older, and often weaker, animal while preserving a younger, healthier buck. And while winning a “big buck” contest does confer recognition (bragging rights?) on the winner, it is not done for the joy of killing; the winner’s main purpose is to provide game for his/her table.

At the meeting, it was stated that there was no intent to impact Boone and Crockett. Boone and Crockett maintains a registry of the biggest game taken, typically by the size of the animal’s horns or antlers. These are exactly the criteria used in big buck contests, and the primary inducement for both is recognition. We feel it would be inconsistent to claim to support Boone and Crockett and at the same time to ban “big buck” contests.

The San Diego County Wildlife Federation implores the Commission to distinguish “killing contests” (which we oppose) from contests which emphasize the quality of the game taken. We believe that these local contests and Boone and Crockett are consistent with ethical hunting.

Respectfully,

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