

## H. 132: Protect Wildlife, Humans & Pets from the Unintended Consequences of Baiting

While hunting over bait in Vermont is illegal for many animals, including bears, deer, and moose, it is still a legal practice for hunting bobcats, coyotes, foxes, and other animals classified as furbearers. H.132 would put an end to this harmful practice.

One of the most compelling reasons to end this practice is the needless and traumatic deaths of pets. Bait, such as rotting meat, is left out to attract wild animals, but it also lures dogs to their deaths. The dogs approach the bait piles, and hunters, who mistake the dogs for animals like coyotes, shoot and kill them.

### *Baiting Kills Untargeted Wildlife*

Baiting can help spread diseases, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Baiting encourages the unnatural congregation of animals into small areas and puts them in close contact with one another. Commissioner of Health Dr. Mark Levine spoke to legislators about his concern for birds. Since 2022, there have been 100 detections in wild birds, and five backyard flocks have died from HPAI.

HPAI has been detected in a variety of wild birds in Vermont, including bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, Canada geese, wood ducks, mallards, black ducks, and turkey vultures. Infected birds have been found in all regions of the state. Many of these species of birds are the types of birds attracted to bait piles.

### *Baiting Leads to the Deaths of Beloved Pets like Sadie, Rambo, and Scout*

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, 28% of Vermont households own a dog. Public lands are for shared recreation, yet Vermont allows baiting furbearers on various public lands where dogs are not required to be leashed.



*Bobcats are one of the species currently allowed to be hunted over bait.*

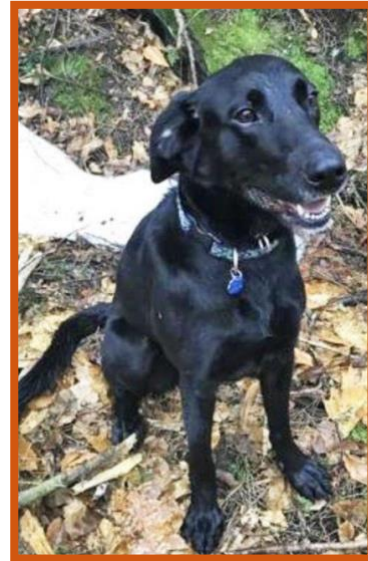
Baiting incidents also occur on private property. Baiting lures pets away from their owners' land and other lands where pets lawfully recreate. This creates a dangerous situation, one that has ended in tragedy

for multiple dogs in Vermont. Even when pets aren't killed, they can be sickened by harmful bait like tainted meat.

Sadie and her owners had walked dozens of times in the woods where one of the owner's parents lives. The activity was something they really enjoyed. A neighbor had set out a bait pile to try to attract coyotes. Sadie entered the neighboring yard, probably attracted by the bait pile. The neighbor shot Sadie from the window of his house. Sadie's owner heard two gunshots and Sadie's yelps. They rushed Sadie to the emergency veterinary clinic, where she soon died.

Rambo's neighbor, who mistook Rambo for a coyote, used an AR-15 rifle with a night scope to shoot Rambo from the window of his garage.

Scout belonged to a married couple, both Iraq War veterans, who had let Scout out for a routine break. Scout was found about 400 yards from his home, shot in the head next to a bait pile. One of Scout's owners shared these words: "We were with her for 10 years. She played an important role in our lives. She helped me to readjust to civilian life."



*Sadie*

### ***Baiting Violates the Ethics of "Fair Chase" Hunting***

The ethics of fair chase hunting were popularized by Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt, an avid hunter who was against the senseless slaughter of animals. During a bear hunt, Roosevelt's guide tied a bear to a tree so that Roosevelt could shoot it. Roosevelt refused to shoot the bear, considering it unsportsmanlike. This incident became the basis for the creation of the teddy bear.

The House Committee on Environment recently heard testimony from a present-day hunter who testified that he is passionate about ethical hunting practices, and H.132 would align with his value of the honorable treatment of wildlife.

The Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports surveyed attitudes towards different types of hunting. Hunting over bait had significantly less support than hunting with a bow and arrow or gun. More respondents disapproved of hunting over bait than approved of the practice. Allowing this harmful practice erodes the public's acceptance of hunting overall.



*Bait pile left on side of road in Addison County by coyote hunters.*

*Please support H.132 to help keep wildlife, pets, and people safe.*

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