

DFA calls for continued 'bad coyote' control

County council tonight is expected to take no action on its effectively rescinded Problem Predator Control bylaw except to note that Government Services (GGS) has formally received correspondence from Dufferin Federation of Agriculture (DFA) requesting that the controls afforded by the bylaw should be continued.

Although DFA will not have representation at tonight's meeting, the 500-member farm business organization is not about to abandon its request. President Bill McCutcheon said in a phone interview Wednesday that DFA would be returning to a future GGS meeting with a draft of a proposed new bylaw, and would also attend the November meeting of the council.

In the letter at GGS, Mr. McCutcheon said the DFA members 'generate in excess of \$120 million per year in gross farm receipts. Over 200 of these businesses are beef or sheep producers whose livestock may be vulnerable to coyote predation.'

It went on to say that there have been 'significant predation issues in the past' and, although farmers can be compensated for the direct value of predation losses 'they are not compensated for the loss of production that results in the removal of these animals from the breeding herds and flocks in the county.'

On Wednesday, he said his members rely on 'lethal control' of coyotes only 'as a last resort,' and even then there is no intention to eradicate coyotes but only to identify and eliminate the bad ones.

DFA's proposed bylaw would stipulate that the hunting of the coyote would occur within a specific radius of a recent kill. 'You can't tell a good coyote from a bad one by looking at it. But once you get a coyote (eating sheep) it's hard to (stop it).'

He said the DFA prefers to protect livestock through non-lethal means, and its members are doing so in every way possible, but lethal controls are still needed for the 'bad' predators. And the bylaw has been effective.

'The fact that it hasn't been used as often is proof that it has been effective,' he said.

In the letter at GGS, Mr. McCutcheon cited numbers: 'On my own farm in East Luther about

35-40 sheep and lambs were claimed for livestock compensation or disappeared in 2011 and 2012. In 2013 less than 10 head have been claimed or have gone missing.

'I contribute this to a number of factors including predator fencing, better guard dogs, a greater abundance of nature coyote prey and use the (of) Problem Predator Control Bylaw to hunting problem predators in the township.

'Since the Problem Predator Control Bylaw was adopted in 2010 there has also been a decrease in reports of coyotes seen in urban areas in the county,' he said in his letter.

Dufferin County didn't specifically rescind the 2010 bylaw but it became invalid when the Ministry of Natural Resources chose not to continue its involvement. The county bylaw included reference to the MNR.

Now, according to the information from DFA, there are fewer predator coyotes than in pre-2010 but there are still some.

It is vital, Mr. McCutcheon said, to have a bylaw in place when the snow flies as the snow cover would facilitate tracking.

By Wes Keller