



Utah's Predator Control Program Summary

Mule Deer Protection Act (SB245) and Predator Control Funding (SB87)



Program activities and data from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026
Prepared by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

**Wildlife
Resources**

Table of contents

Utah's Predator Control Program, Fiscal Year 2026	3
Program Activities and Data from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.....	3
Participation, Payments, and Coyotes Submitted for Payment.....	3
Impact of the Program: Estimates from Survey Data.....	6
Temporal Distribution of Coyote Submissions and Harvest	7
Biological Data	9
Spatial Distribution of Coyote Take.....	10
Number of Coyotes Submitted by Deer Unit in FY26	12
Number of Coyotes Submitted by County in FY26.....	14
Conclusion	16

Utah's Predator Control Program, Fiscal Year 2026

Program Activities and Data from July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

Utah's Mule Deer Protection Act (SB245) and Predator Control Funding (SB87) were enacted in July of 2012. The enabling legislation is codified in Utah 23A-11-4, giving the Utah Wildlife Board authority to make rules "to establish programs to accomplish... general predator control, including programs that offer incentives or compensation to participants who remove a predatory animal that is detrimental to mule deer production."

To administer the bounty program, the Utah Wildlife Board approved Administrative Rule R657-64, Predator Control Incentives. Under R657-64 the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (Division) implemented the General Predator Control Program, which tracks harvest and participation and provides payment to participants in the program. The Division established locations throughout the state where people could check in a coyote for a \$50 payment. Each participant would submit the scalp of the animal with ears attached, the lower jaw, and data on the kill location recorded in the Division-approved app.

In 2025, the Utah Wildlife Board approved rule changes to increase the coyote bounty payment in mapped mule deer habitat areas to \$100 per coyote. Coyotes taken outside of the delineated mule deer habitat remain at the \$50 bounty. The check-in requirements were also changed to only require the lower jaw from the coyote (no more scalp with ears) at check-in.

This report summarizes details from the implementation of the Act in Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26), which runs from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. In FY26, a budget of \$250,000 was allocated to Utah's Predator Control Program. This is a separate pool of money that is specifically designated for coyote bounty payments and any leftover funds are added back into the general fund at the end of the fiscal year. The program paid out all of the allocated \$250,000 in coyote bounties by January 2026. The unanticipated rapid success led to a lack of funds that caused the program to be suspended until the legislature allocated an additional \$200,000 for the rest of FY26. The legislature further allocated a total of \$450,000 for each future year, which is on par with the \$500,000 allocation that the program had from FY13 – FY22. The 365-day time limit for some coyote bounty submissions expired while the program was temporarily suspended, which likely resulted in fewer coyotes reported here than were taken in the program.

Participation, Payments, and Coyotes Submitted for Payment

FY26 was the fourteenth year of Utah's General Predator Control Program. This was the first full year of the new stratified bounty, and 67% of the total coyote submissions came from kills in the mule deer habitat areas. A total of 4,972 coyotes were checked in for \$414,500 in compensation, an increase of 12% compared to 4,422 coyotes in FY25 (Figures 1 and 2).

In FY26, 560 individuals submitted coyotes through the General Predator Control Program. The number of total participants increased by 21% from the previous year (n=462). The number of coyotes submitted per hunter remained very similar to the distribution in FY25. In FY26 17% of participants submitted only one coyote and 44% of participants submitted five or more coyotes. Only 2% of participants submitted more than 50 animals.

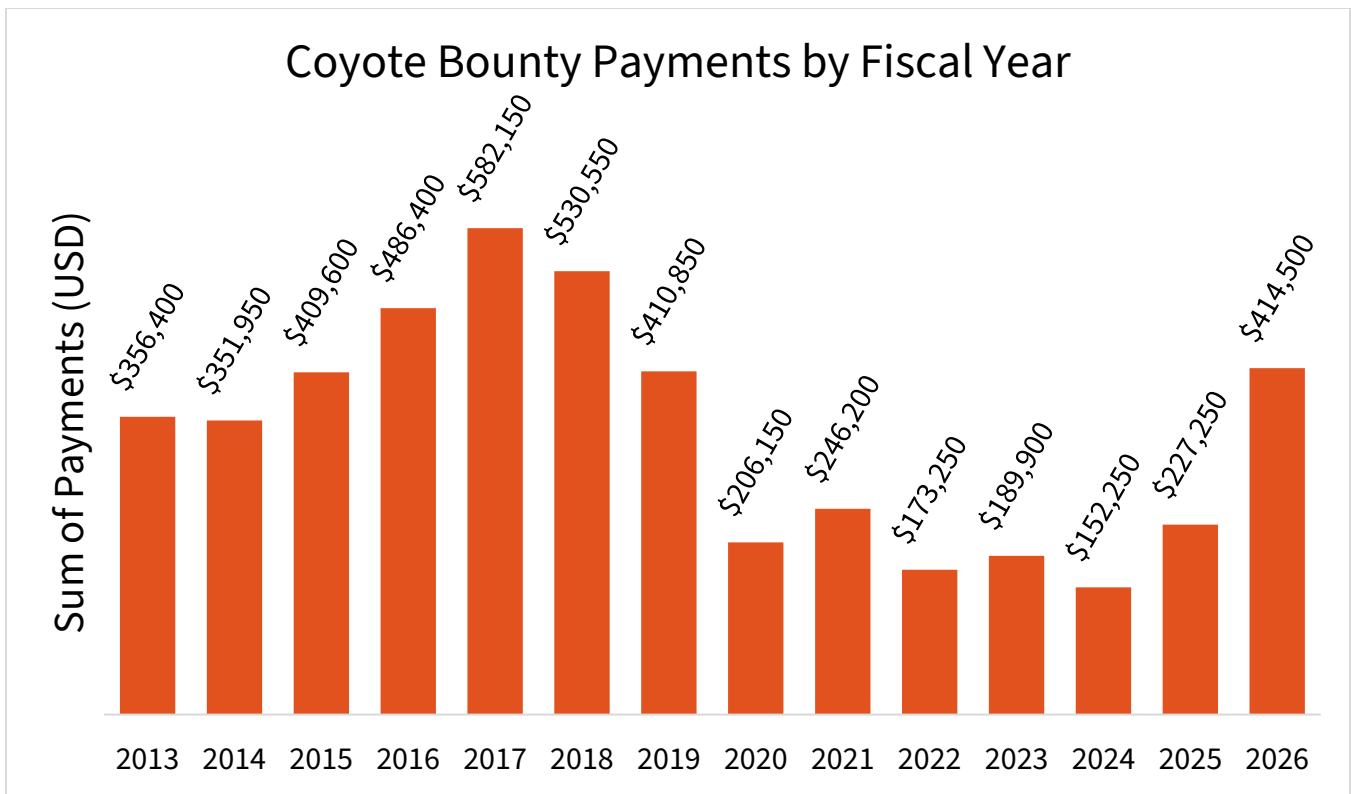


Figure 1. The Utah legislature appropriated funds paid out to participants in the coyote bounty program. Figures do not include costs incurred for program administration.

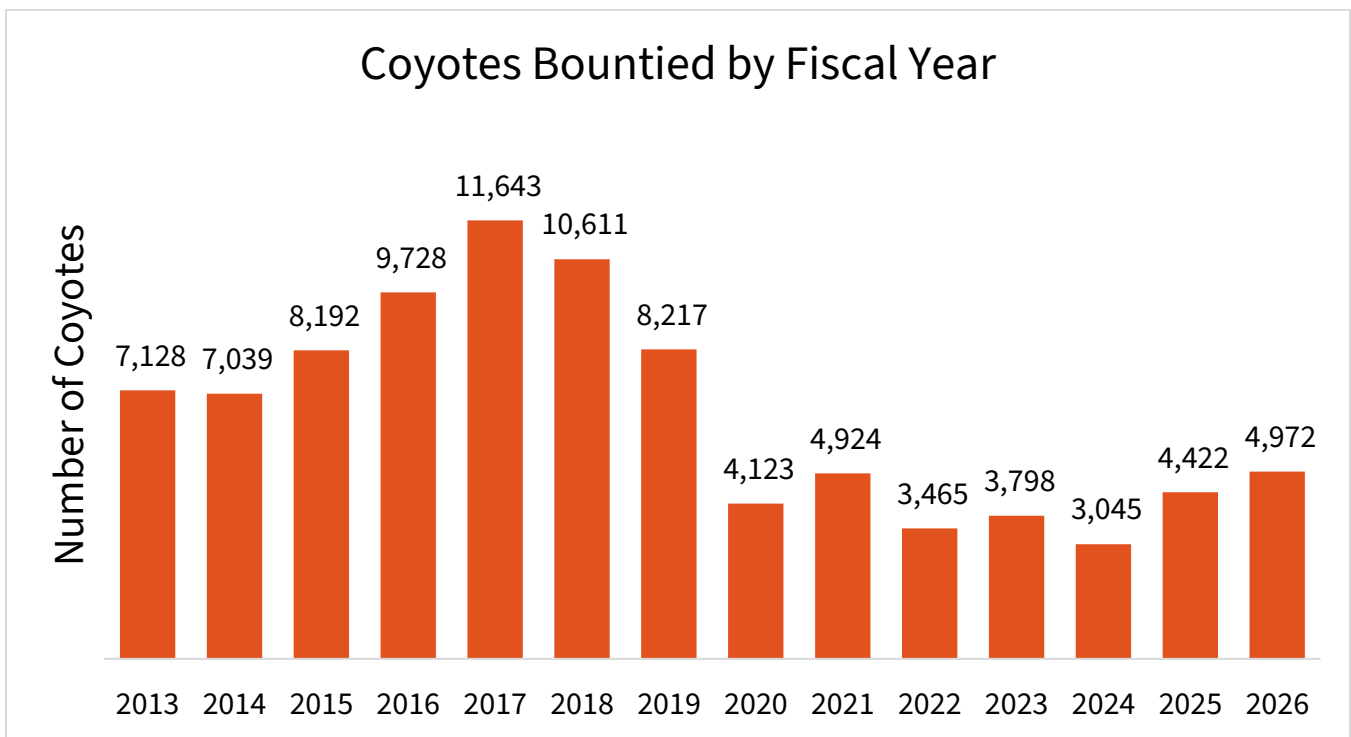


Figure 2. The number of coyotes submitted for bounty payment each fiscal year in Utah.

The new bounty structure pays \$100 for coyotes taken in mapped mule deer habitat in Utah. There were 3,318 coyotes submitted for a bounty payment in FY26 that were taken within mule deer habitat. Comparatively, 1,654 coyotes were taken outside of mule deer habitat areas and turned in for the \$50 bounty (Figure 3).

86% of all participants collected at least one \$100 bounty for a coyote killed within mapped mule deer habitat in FY26, and 61% collected at least one \$50 bounty. 28% of those who submitted coyotes taken in mule deer habitat were new to the program, while only 9% of participants that killed a coyote outside of the mapped mule deer habitat areas were new to the program. There was a total of 166 new participants that submitted coyotes for bounty in FY26 compared to 127 new participants in FY25.

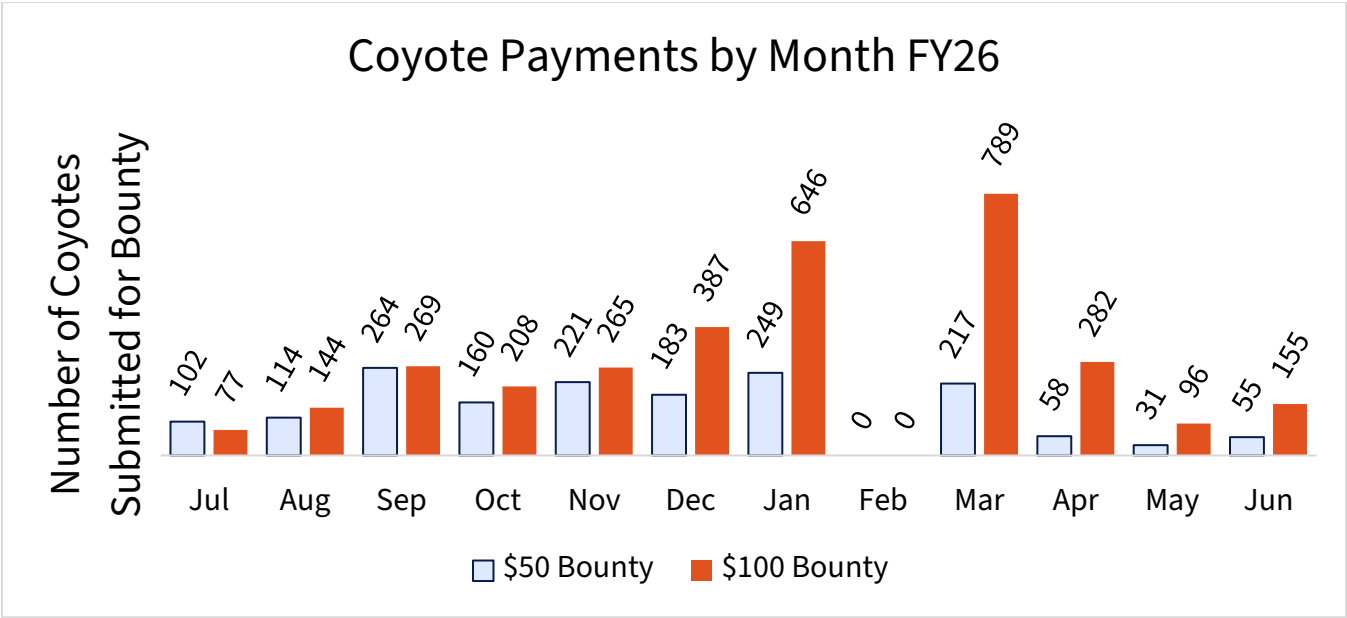


Figure 3. The number of coyotes submitted for each type of bounty payment by month for fiscal year 2026 in Utah. The \$100 bounty is given for kills within mapped mule deer habitat areas, and the \$50 bounty is given for coyotes taken outside of mapped mule deer habitat.

Impact of the Program: Estimates from Survey Data

The Division's yearly furbearer survey provides supplementary information about coyote harvest in Utah. In the 10 years preceding the implementation of the Mule Deer Protection Act, annual coyote take reported in the furbearer harvest report averaged 6,332 per year. The reported harvest of coyotes by hunters holding a furbearer license during the 2025-2026 season was 4,628.

The total reported coyote take by the general public during FY26, consisting of coyotes turned in for bounty payments (4,972) and coyotes reported in the furbearer harvest survey (2,643), was 7,615¹.

Additionally, the Division has a cooperative interagency agreement with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) to remove coyotes under this program. The UDAF personnel reported removing 3,011 coyotes during FY26. Of the coyotes killed by the UDAF, 364 were shot or trapped in mule deer core areas.

The total estimated number of coyotes killed for FY26 through the General Predator Control Program (4,972), reported through the furbearer harvest survey (2,643), and by the UDAF (3,011) was 10,626 coyotes (Figure 4).

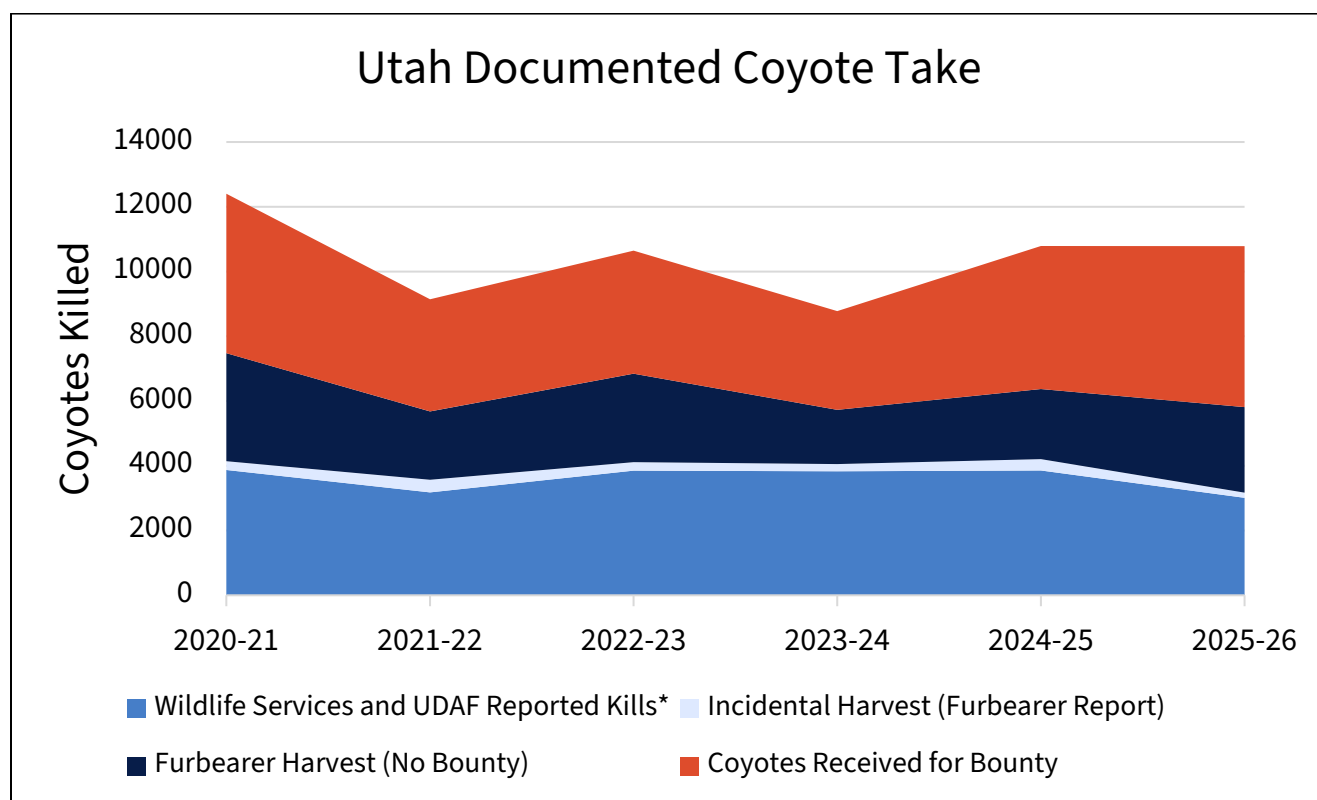


Figure 4. The total number of coyote kills documented in Utah during FY26. *Wildlife Services conducted targeted coyote removal from 2018-23 and the UDAF took over in FY24.

¹ To calculate an accurate total without duplication, the reported take from the furbearer harvest survey was corrected for coyotes counted in both the harvest survey and bounty submissions.

Temporal Distribution of Coyote Submissions and Harvest

Coyote kills in FY26 peaked in November 2025 (Figure 5) and bounty submissions peaked in March 2026 (Figure 6). The participation patterns differ slightly from previous years, with a significant drop in kills after the program was temporarily suspended at the end of January due to an exhaustion of funds (Figure 5). Coyotes could not be checked in during the month of February while the program was suspended (Figure 6). Any coyotes that hit their year mark and expired while the program was suspended were not allowed to be submitted for bounty, as the rule mandates. On the whole, the participation trend continues to reflect a seasonal increase in coyote kills through the winter months, with a lag between kill data and bounty check-in.

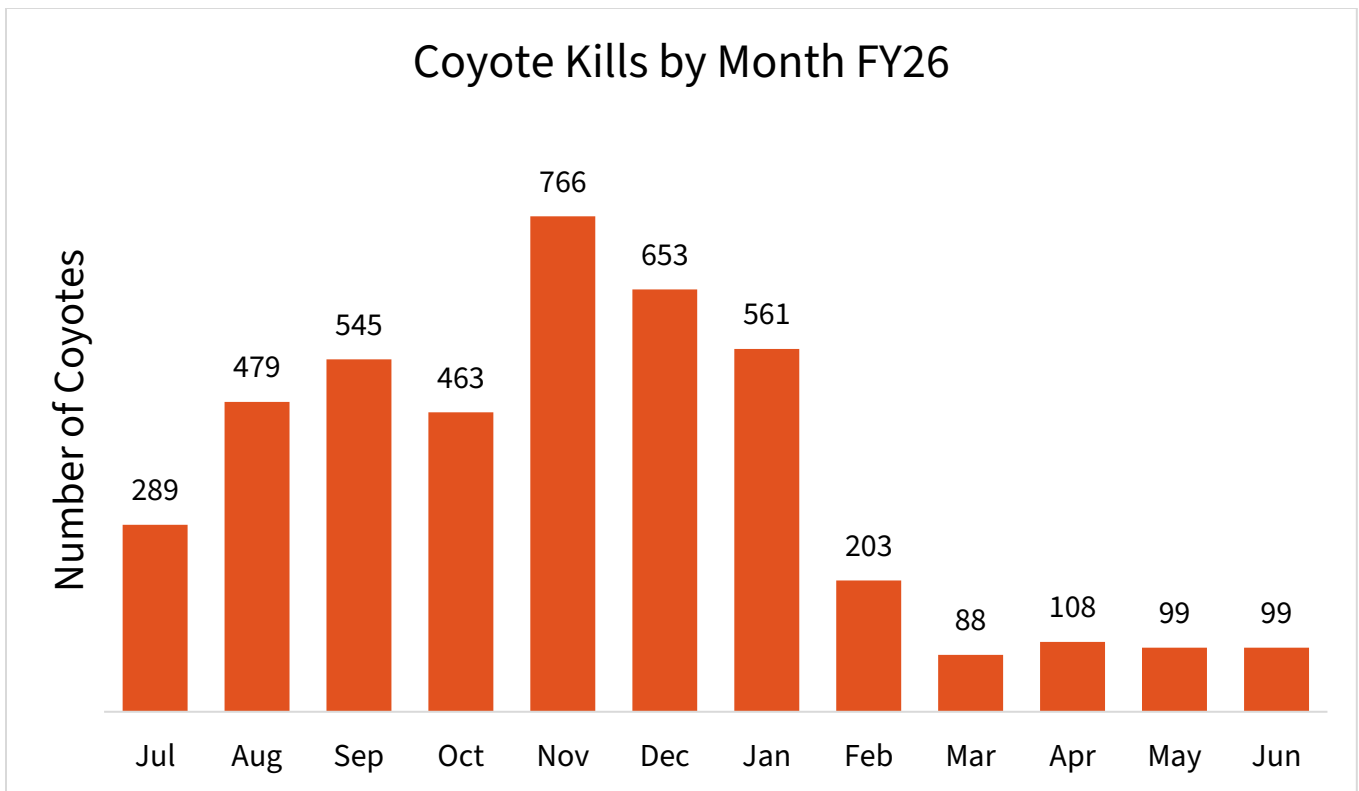


Figure 5. The number of verified coyotes killed and reported in the Utah Bounty Reporter Survey123 app by month in FY26, which runs from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

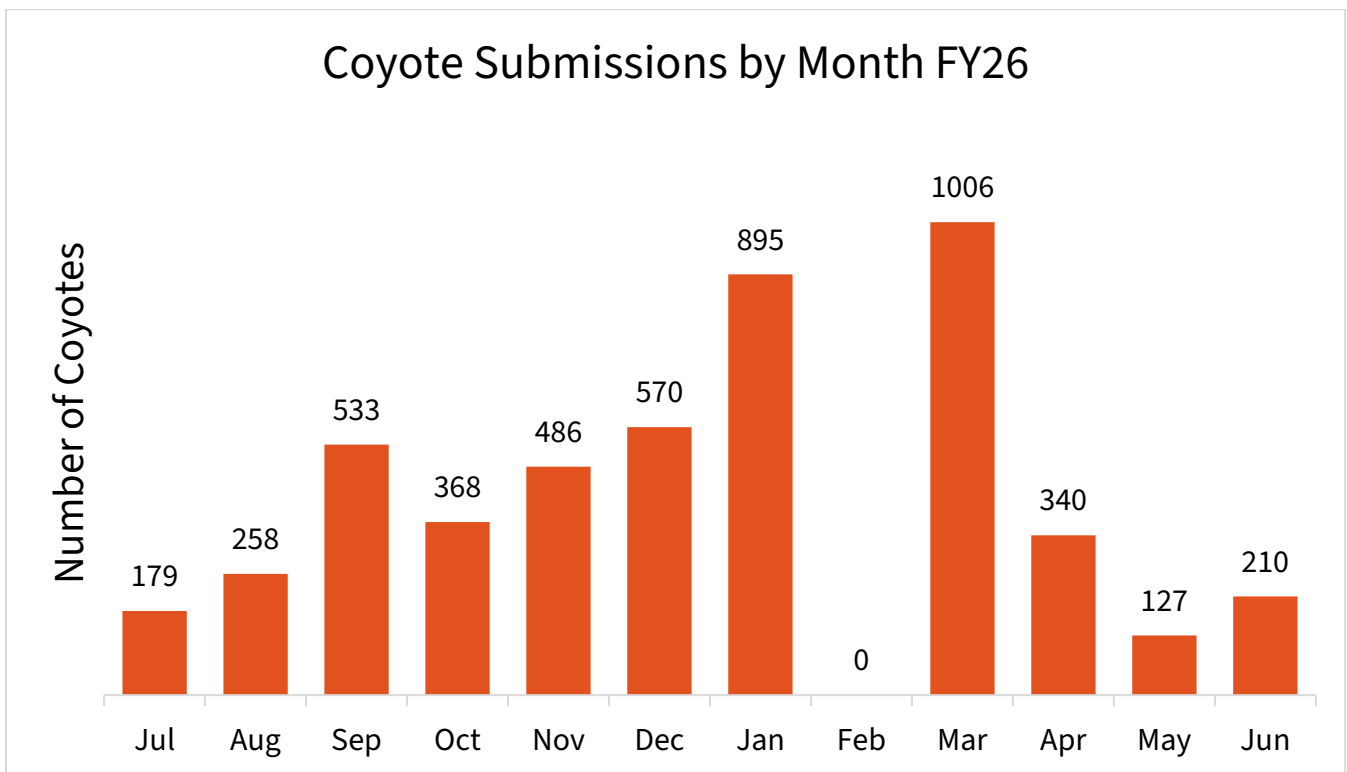


Figure 6. The number of coyotes checked in for bounty payments by month during FY26, which runs from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

Biological Data

Biological data was compiled for 4,353 coyotes submitted in FY26 via the Utah Coyote Bounty Reporter form in the Survey123 app and verified at check-in between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026². The results show that 2,067 (47%) of the coyotes were female and 2,285 (53%) were male (1 unspecified). The take method reported for these coyotes included shoot/call (3,251; 75%), trap/snare (839; 19%), roadkill (144; 3%), and other methods (119; 3%).

Tooth data to establish the age structure of coyotes turned in for bounty was collected using a random sub-sample of teeth from twenty percent of coyotes submitted for bounty in FY25. The results show that 89% of all the sampled coyotes were two-years old or younger, with 55% of those being less than one-year old (Figure 7). The oldest animal found during the analysis was eight years old. These results are consistent with data collected in fiscal years 2013 - 2019. Specific details about past coyote age data can be found in previous annual reports. Due to consistent trends in age of bountied coyotes, the frequency of coyote teeth collection has been reduced to once every five years to minimize costs associated with the program.

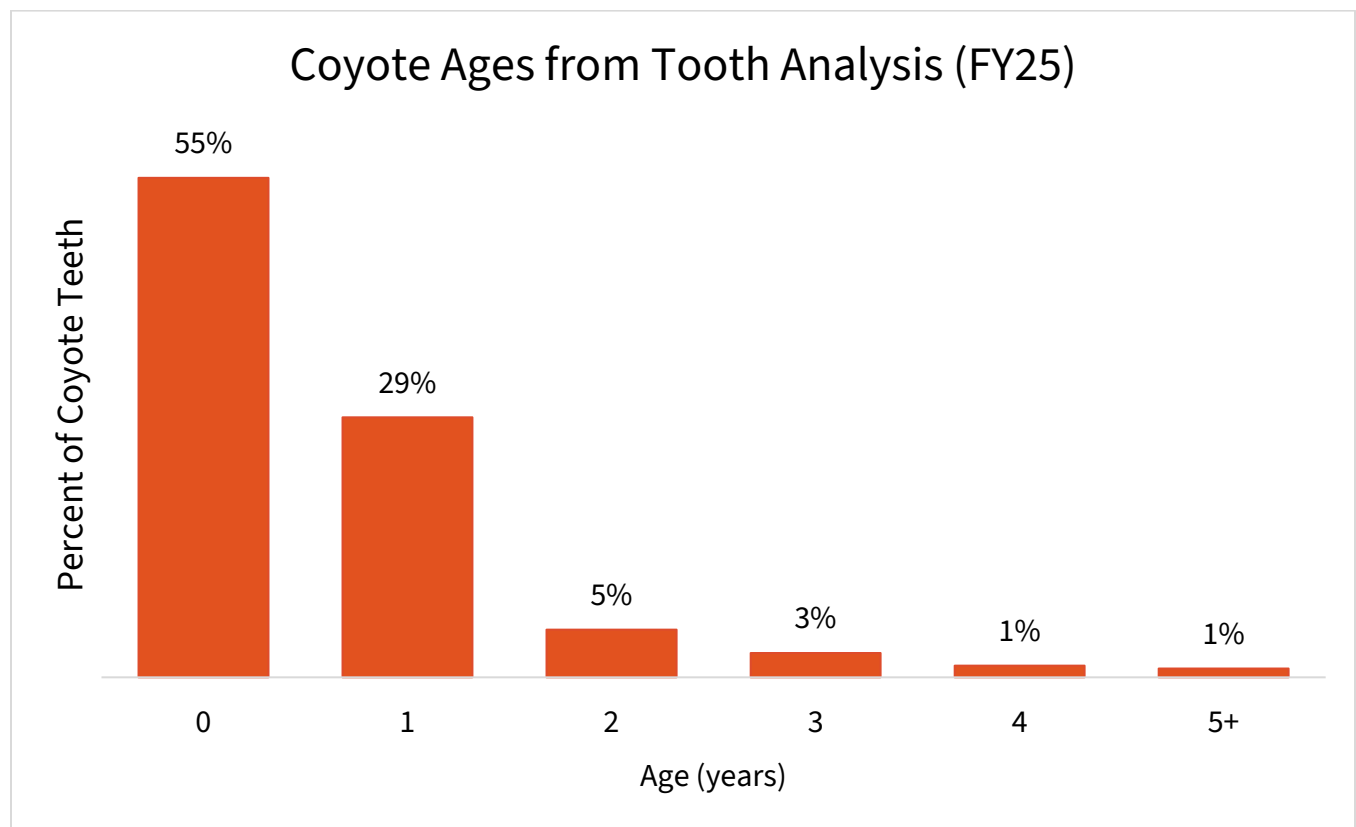


Figure 7. Age of coyotes determined by cementum annuli in FY25, which ran from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 (n=875). Six percent of the samples were unusable, and thus not shown in this figure.

² Coyotes killed during FY26 may be verified at check in during FY26 or FY27 since participants have 365 days from the kill date to submit their coyotes for payment. As such, the verified number of coyotes with reliable biological data at the time of this report is lower than the total number of coyotes killed in FY26 due to the check in lag (as shown in Figures 5 and 6).

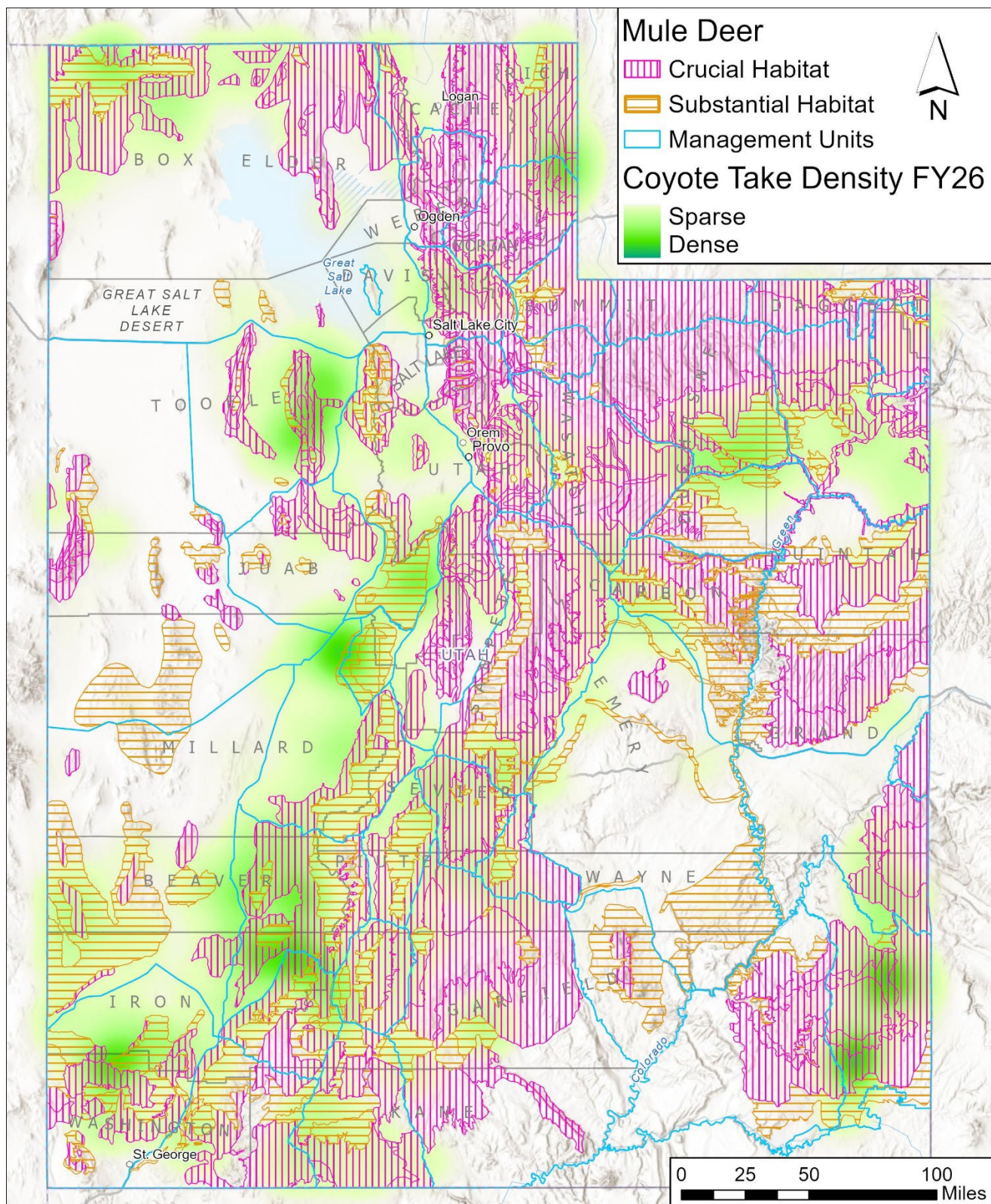
Spatial Distribution of Coyote Take

In FY26 there were 4,346 coyotes recorded in the bounty reporter app with usable spatial data and verified at a check-in³. Of those, 2,409 (55%) were killed in crucial mule deer range, 823 (19%) were killed in substantial value mule deer range, and 1,114 (26%) were killed outside of the mapped mule deer habitat (Figure 8).

One desired outcome of the rule changes in 2025 is to increase the coyote take within mule deer habitat to improve mule deer production. In FY26, the proportion of coyotes taken in mapped mule deer habitat compared to non-habitat areas deviated from the previous trend of a roughly fifty-fifty split. The percent of coyotes taken in crucial and substantial mule deer habitat in FY26 increased while the percent of coyotes taken outside of mapped mule deer habitat decreased. The total number of coyotes killed within mule deer habitat more than doubled from last year, going from 1,483 in FY25 to 3,232 in FY26.

A summary of FY26 coyote removal locations within Utah found that coyote removal for bounty submission was variable across the state. Of the mule deer management units, the Box Elder unit had the most kills (327) and the Kamas and the La Sal, Dolores Triangle units had the fewest, with no documented coyote kills (Table 1). Coyote removal locations were also recorded by county, and the highest number of kills (435) was in Iron county (Table 2). Removals were fairly dispersed across the state this year, with six counties each having over 5% of the total coyote take. (Figure 8).

³ Coyotes killed during FY26 may be verified at check in during FY26 or FY27 since participants have 365 days from the kill date to submit their coyotes for payment. As such, the verified number of coyotes with reliable spatial data at the time of this report is lower than the total number of coyotes killed in FY26 due to the check in lag (as shown in Figures 5 and 6).



Utah Geospatial Resource Center, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USFWS, Esri, USGS

Figure 8. Coyote removal densities from coyotes submitted for bounty in FY26, with boundaries for mule deer management units and mapped mule deer habitat. 26% of coyotes were killed outside of mapped mule deer habitat, 55% were killed in crucial mule deer habitat, and 19% were killed in substantial value mule deer habitat.

Number of Coyotes Submitted by Deer Unit in FY26

Table 1. Number of coyotes submitted to the predator control program within each deer unit in FY26.

Mule Deer Management Unit	Number of Coyote Bounties Paid	Percent of Bounties
Antelope Island	3	0.1%
Beaver	325	7.5%
Book Cliffs	55	1.3%
Boulder/Kaiparowits	151	3.5%
Box Elder	327	7.5%
Cache	155	3.6%
Cedar/Stansbury	228	5.2%
Chalk Creek	20	0.5%
Diamond Mtn	18	0.4%
East Canyon	62	1.4%
Fillmore	212	4.9%
Fillmore, Oak Creek LE	67	1.5%
Fishlake	102	2.3%
Henry Mtns	9	0.2%
Kamas	0	0.0%
La Sal, Dolores Triangle	0	0.0%
La Sal, La Sal Mtns	105	2.4%
Manti	108	2.5%
Monroe	48	1.1%
Morgan-South Rich	63	1.4%
Mt Dutton	60	1.4%
Nebo	74	1.7%
Nine Mile, Anthro	38	0.9%
Nine Mile, Range Creek	48	1.1%

Mule Deer Management Unit	Number of Coyote Bounties Paid	Percent of Bounties
North Slope, Summit	4	0.1%
North Slope, Three Corners/West Daggett	25	0.6%
Ogden	10	0.2%
Oquirrh/Tintic	171	3.9%
Panguitch Lake	139	3.2%
Paunsaugunt	122	2.8%
Pine Valley	262	6.0%
San Juan, Abajo Mtns	313	7.2%
San Juan, Elk Ridge	26	0.6%
San Rafael	78	1.8%
Southwest Desert	259	6.0%
Thousand Lakes	32	0.7%
Vernal/Bonanza	135	3.1%
Wasatch Mtns, East	86	2.0%
Wasatch Mtns, West	54	1.2%
West Desert, Swasey	70	1.6%
West Desert, Vernon	47	1.1%
Yellowstone	138	3.2%
Zion	96	2.2%

Number of Coyotes Submitted by County in FY26

Table 2. Number of coyotes submitted to the predator control program within each county in FY26.

County	Number of Coyote Bounties Paid	Percent of Bounties
Beaver	321	7.4%
Box Elder	322	7.4%
Cache	28	0.6%
Carbon	85	2.0%
Daggett	34	0.8%
Davis	36	0.8%
Duchesne	184	4.2%
Emery	86	2.0%
Garfield	210	4.8%
Grand	51	1.2%
Iron	435	10.0%
Juab	180	4.1%
Kane	166	3.8%
Millard	355	8.2%
Morgan	34	0.8%
Piute	49	1.1%
Rich	166	3.8%
Salt Lake	15	0.3%
San Juan	411	9.5%
Sanpete	43	1.0%
Sevier	180	4.1%
Summit	28	0.6%
Tooele	299	6.9%
Uintah	214	4.9%

County	Number of Coyote Bounties Paid	Percent of Bounties
Utah	89	2.0%
Wasatch	57	1.3%
Washington	183	4.2%
Wayne	80	1.8%
Weber	3	0.1%

Conclusion

Utah's Predator Control Program continued across the state during Fiscal Year 2026. The number of reported bounties was considerably higher before introducing fraud reduction measures in 2019; however, the number of coyotes bountied has remained relatively consistent over the last seven years. The proportion of total coyotes taken for bounty increased in mapped mule deer habitat areas in FY26 while the proportion taken outside of mapped mule deer habitat decreased relative to previous years.

Changes in mule deer population estimates since the implementation of the program have varied by unit; however, a central Utah experiment found that consecutive years of coyote removal in mule deer fawning habitat increased neonate mule deer survival⁴. Further assessment of fawn recruitment and coyote removals through Utah's General Predator Control Program is necessary to understand if the program benefits mule deer at any scale. Many factors that influence deer populations, such as weather, habitat conditions, and alternative prey availability, need to be accounted for when assessing the impacts of the program.

In an effort to assess the effectiveness of the program and address the aforementioned details, a study⁵ was initiated in 2017. Results from this observational study show a discrepancy between where coyotes were killed for bounty and where mule deer fawns were most vulnerable within the Manti deer unit. Further studies are underway to expand this research and find better ways to estimate coyote population sizes.

4 McMillan, B. R., Hall, J. T., Freeman, E. D., Hersey, K. R., & Larsen, R. T. (2023). Both temporal and spatial aspects of predator management influence survival of a temperate ungulate through early life. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, 11(1087063). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fevo.2023.1087063>

5 Walden, Xaela M. (2025). Habitat selection analysis of mule deer to determine efficacy of the coyote bounty program in Utah. *All Graduate Theses and Dissertations, Fall 2023 to Present*. 545. <https://doi.org/10.26076/45ca-5389>