

To:	Warden Matrosovs and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	January 9, 2025
Subject / Report No:	PDR-CW-02-25
Title:	Review of Nuisance Beaver and Coyote/Wolf By-laws
Prepared by:	Sarah Johnson and Scott Taylor
Reviewed by:	Randy Scherzer
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All

Recommendation

1. That report PDR-CW-02-25 be received; and
2. That staff be directed to prepare an update to the beaver and coyote/wolf by-laws for Council's consideration, with input and consultation from the agricultural sector, trappers, municipalities, provincial ministries, and the public.

Executive Summary

In response to correspondence received by Committee of the Whole on October 10, 2024, staff have investigated the County's current nuisance beaver and coyote/wolf compensation by-laws. This report provides a brief history on the by-laws, financial considerations related to beaver and coyote/wolf claims, as well as a summary of other municipal approaches on this topic. Staff recommended an increase in the County's budget for beaver and coyote/wolf claims from the current \$10,000, for each by-law, to a proposed \$15,000 for each by-law in the 2025 budget. Staff are also recommending that the two by-laws be reviewed in 2025 for both efficiency and compensation levels, following consultation with the agricultural sector, trappers, municipalities, provincial ministries, and the public.

Background and Discussion

At the October 10, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting, an item of correspondence from Gary Stocking was discussed. The correspondence raised questions with the County's current nuisance animal control by-laws and requested an increase in the compensation paid under these by-laws. Staff were directed to investigate what other municipalities are doing with regard to the by-laws and compensation programs in comparison to the existing programs that are in place.

Since the initial correspondence, staff have completed the following:

- had a follow-up discussion with Mr. Stocking,
- had a discussion with the County’s Agricultural Advisory Committee,
- conducted further research on other municipal approaches, and
- undertaken a financial review of the past 10 years of County spending on the beaver and coyote/wolf programs.

The County currently has two nuisance by-laws/programs, one for beavers and one for coyotes/wolves. These by-laws compensate for eligible beavers, coyotes, and wolves, trapped in Grey County.

Beaver By-law

The County’s beaver by-law was first introduced in 1983, and the last update was 2004. Although beavers can play a beneficial role in ecosystems by creating wetlands and enhancing biodiversity, there are instances where their activities can lead to significant negative impacts. Beaver dams can sometimes cause water to back up, resulting in the flooding of surrounding lands, roads, and infrastructure. This can lead to the destruction of agricultural crops, cause damage to property, disrupt waterways used for irrigation or recreational purposes, and result in the flooding and damage of roads, bridges, and culverts. Beavers can also cause damage to forest ecosystems through flooding as well as by cutting down trees and saplings to build their dams and lodges. Trapping can be used to help control the size of beaver populations and manage their dam-building activities, which helps mitigate these risks.

Through by-laws 3274-91 and 4114-04, the County currently compensates \$25 per beaver. This compensation rate was last increased in 1990 from a rate of \$15.

To qualify for compensation there is a form associated with the by-law that needs to be completed. The trapping and compensation process is as follows:

1. The landowner identifies the problem and hires a licensed trapper.
2. The landowner and trapper each fill in the County’s form, including address, location of issue, description of the issue, and the trapper’s license number.
3. The beaver tails are brought to the municipal office for verification. A designated municipal staff person will verify and sign the form from step 2, and it is sent on to Grey County for review and approval for payment.
4. The trapper is required to be a permanent resident of Grey County in order to qualify.

In previous years the budget was higher for beaver claims, as the number of claims submitted were higher, for example in 2013 there were 687 beaver claims with a budget of \$25,000. Prior to the last few years, the number of claims submitted were decreasing and as such the budget line item was also reduced. However, in the last few years, the County has seen more claims being submitted. In 2023 this line item was over budget with 633 beaver claims (\$15,825 paid out with a \$10,000 budget) and 2024 is already over budget, as of the time of writing this report. Table 1 below provides a summary of 2013 – 2024 (year to date) budgeted amounts and claims paid each year.

Table 1: Beaver Grants Paid and Budgeted Amount 2013 – 2024

Year	Budgeted Amount	Claims Paid
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2013	\$25,000	\$17,175
2014	\$25,000	\$14,500
2015	\$25,000	\$13,225
2016	\$22,500	\$16,500
2017	\$22,500	\$12,900
2018	\$20,000	\$7,275
2019	\$20,000	\$7,700
2020	\$15,000	\$7,550
2021	\$12,500	\$13,025
2022	\$10,000	\$9,425
2023	\$10,000	\$15,825
2024	\$10,000	\$10,425*

*Year to date as of November 29, 2024

Coyote/Wolf By-law

The County’s coyote/wolf by-law was first introduced in 1990, and the last update was 2010. Through by-laws 4645-10 and 3332-92, the County currently compensates \$50 per coyote/wolf. Although the by-law provides compensation for both coyotes and wolves, the vast majority of the claims are for coyotes.

With respect to the coyote/wolf program, the County only pays for claims where there has been livestock predation, and the claim is per coyote/wolf trapped. The County does not reimburse farmers for the value of the lost livestock. There is a program run by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness and Ministry of Rural Affairs that will reimburse the owner for the livestock that was killed by predation.

Similar to the beaver by-law, to qualify for compensation there is a form associated with the by-law that needs to be completed. The process is more in depth than the beaver program. The process is as follows:

1. The livestock owner identifies the animals that they lost to predation and notifies the municipal livestock evaluator.
2. The municipal livestock evaluator confirms the predation.
3. A licensed trapper is appointed and hunts the coyotes/wolves.
4. The livestock owner and trapper each fill in the County’s form, including address, location of issue, description of the issue, and the trapper’s license number.
5. The ears for each coyote/wolf are presented at the municipal office confirming the kill, along with the form noted in step 4, where a designated municipal staff person will verify and sign the form, and it is sent on to Grey County for review and approval for payment.

6. The trapper is required to be a resident of Grey County in order to qualify.

Each step listed above is a section on the form that requires dates and signatures. The current form is a dated provincial form which has a section that is no longer used and presently is stroked out when presented for payment. If there are proposed changes to the by-law, this form should also be updated.

Similar to that of the beaver claims, in previous years the budget was higher for coyote compensation as the number of claims that were submitted were higher. In recent years the annual budget for coyote claims has been reduced. Since 2017 the number of claims submitted have been below \$10,000 each year, though 2023 did see an increased number of claims over other recent years. Anecdotally, staff still hear from farmers that coyotes continue to cause issues, and population numbers remain high. However, the increased number of claims has not been as significant as with the beaver claims over recent years. Table 2 below provides a summary of 2013 – 2024 (year to date) budgeted amounts and claims paid each year.

Table 2: Coyote/Wolf Grants Paid and Budgeted Amount 2013 - 2024

Year	Budgeted Amount	Claims Paid
2013	\$20,000	\$6,000
2014	\$20,000	\$7,850
2015	\$20,000	\$11,450
2016	\$15,000	\$12,200
2017	\$15,000	\$8,750
2018	\$12,500	\$6,300
2019	\$12,500	\$9,350
2020	\$12,500	\$9,550
2021	\$12,500	\$8,500
2022	\$10,000	\$6,550
2023	\$10,000	\$9,650
2024	\$10,000	\$7,250*

*Year to date as of November 29, 2024

The current process for both the beaver and coyote/wolf claims is that any qualifying claim with the appropriate paperwork and verification gets approved. Staff have not assessed such claims on a 'first come first served' basis, based on the budgeted amount. As such, for 2023 when the beaver claims exceeded the budgeted amount, staff paid out all such claims. Staff do not believe it was fair to landowners or trappers to approve some claims and deny others based on

the timing of when a claim was submitted relative to the remaining budget. The current by-laws do not appear to support such claim denials.

Other Municipal Programs

Grey County staff reached out to neighbouring counties and municipalities to see who had similar programs and what the compensation rates were. Out of the 11 contacted only one, Bruce County, had a nuisance beaver program. Two other municipalities addressed beavers from a maintenance perspective, through the *Drainage Act*, but there was not a directly comparable by-law. Three of the municipalities had coyote compensation by-laws, two of them compensated \$100 per coyote and one compensated \$50. Table 3 below provides a summary of other municipal by-laws.

Table 3: Other Municipal Beaver and Coyote/Coyote By-laws

Municipality or County	Beaver By-law	Bounty	Coyote/Wolf By-law	Bounty
Grey	Yes	\$25	Yes	\$50
Bruce	Yes	\$30	Yes	\$100
Wellington	No	N/A	No	N/A
Minto*	No	N/A	No	N/A
Guelph/Eramosa	No	N/A	No	N/A
Puslinch	No	N/A	No	N/A
Erin	No	N/A	No	N/A
Huron	No	N/A	Yes	\$100
Dufferin**	No	N/A	Yes	\$50
Simcoe	No	N/A	No	N/A
Lanark	No	N/A	No	N/A
Prescott-Russell	No	N/A	No	N/A

*Beavers only through *Drainage Act* for maintenance

** Beavers only in municipal drains (not a direct comparison), and it's a policy, not a by-law.

Based on staff's findings the majority of the counties and municipalities researched do not have by-laws or programs at all. Specifically, with the beaver by-law, the only comparator is Bruce County, and their compensation rate is only \$5 more than what Grey County compensates. With the counties or municipalities that have coyote/wolf compensation, they are slightly higher in that there are other counties with such compensation levels, and of those three, two are \$100 versus what Grey and Dufferin Counties compensate, which is \$50.

Agricultural Advisory Committee

On December 5, 2024, County staff presented to the Agricultural Advisory Committee on the beaver and coyote/wolf by-laws. The presentation and discussion were somewhat abbreviated, given the placement in the agenda with limited time remaining in the meeting. There were some comments made from Committee members about the value of the by-laws, and increased coyote populations.

Trappers

Grey County staff had a discussion regarding the contents of the correspondence (from the October 10, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting) with the author, Mr. Stocking, who is a licensed trapper in Bruce County.

Staff asked Mr. Stocking about what an adequate compensation rate would be. Mr. Stocking noted that compensation currently varies between public and private landowners, which is summarized as follows:

1. some municipalities rely on the bounty for trapping on municipal lands, and trappers do not charge a fee for the service,
2. some municipalities will pay an additional fee set by the municipality in addition to the bounty,
3. some municipalities will pay a fee set by the trapper in addition to the bounty, or
4. where a private landowner requires a trapper, then the trapper's fee would be charged for the service, and the bounty would be collected on top of that.

Where Grey County has required trapping on County lands, the County currently pays the fee set by the trapper and if they qualify, they will also apply for the bounty. Should the County look at amending these by-laws, the County may wish to clarify the relationship between the bounties and trapping on County-owned lands.

Next Steps

Council has the following options open to them, as it applies to the beaver and coyote/wolf by-laws.

1. Discontinue one or both by-laws, and any such trapping that occurs would be paid for by the applicable landowners. Option 1 could include the need for further advocacy to the province on this matter.
2. Leave one or both of the current by-laws 'as-is' with no changes in the compensation rates and no increase in the annual budget for such claims.
3. Leave one or both of the current by-laws 'as-is' with no changes in the compensation rates, but increase the annual budget for such claims.
4. Review both by-laws for efficiency, updates, and compensation.

Staff recommend a mix of options 3 and 4 as per above. In the draft 2025 budget, staff have included an increase for \$15,000 for each of the beaver and coyote/wolf compensation programs, but there is no increase in the fee paid per animal trapped. To increase the amount paid per claim, the by-laws would need to be updated. Staff are recommending a review of both

by-laws in 2025. Beyond the compensation rates, the following matters could be considered in the by-law reviews:

- a) the claim forms,
- b) efficiency of the claims process,
- c) requirements for trappers to be residents of Grey County, and
- d) the relationship between the compensation paid and municipally-initiated trapping could be further investigated.

Depending on the outcome of these reviews, it could inform future County budgets beyond 2025. As part of the review of the by-laws, staff would recommend further consultation with the agricultural sector, trappers, municipalities, provincial ministries, and the public.

Legislated Requirements

The County is not legislatively required to provide either beaver or coyote/wolf removal and compensation by-laws.

Financial and Resource Implications

The draft 2025 budget includes \$30,000 for nuisance beaver and coyote/wolf compensation programs (i.e., \$15,000 for each). While staff cannot predict the number of claims submitted in any given year, staff believe this should be sufficient to cover the claims based on current compensation rates in the by-law.

Should Council wish to repeal the by-laws then there would be savings in the 2025 budget. If that is Council's direction, it would be prudent to give notice of this change to trappers, and include a sunset date for any new claims to be submitted.

Should a review of the by-laws be undertaken, this would be completed by staff using in house resources without requiring any additional budget for 2025. Should new by-laws be passed with amended compensation rates, this could impact the 2025 budget and future County budgets.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: Legal Services, Finance, Clerks, CAO/Deputy CAO, Planning Ecology
 - Contribution to Climate Change Action Plan Targets – while not specific to the Going Green in Grey Action Plan, staff would note that with the impacts of climate change there may be an increase in both native and non-native predators or nuisance animals in the County.
- External: Trappers, Agricultural Advisory Committee, and other municipalities

Appendices and Attachments

Correspondence – Gary Stocking – Request to Increase Bounty of Nuisance Wildlife Removals
[By-law 3274-91 Nuisance Beaver Removal](#) and [Amending By-law 4114-04](#)

[By-law 3332-92 Wolf and Coyote Control By-law](#) and [Amending By-law 4645-10](#)



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Email: guardianwlc1@gmail.com Call or Text: 519-447-4952

August 11, 2024

**RE:
THE CORPORATION OF THE COUNTY OF GREY
BY-LAW NO. 4114-04
A BY-LAW TO AMEND BY-LAW 3274-91 TO PROVIDE FOR
THE REMOVAL OF NUISANCE BEAVER**

Dear Grey County:

I am writing today, to ask if your council would consider raising the price of nuisance beaver removal paid to Certified Trappers. Your policy at \$25.00 per beaver was introduced 20 years ago, in 2004 and has never been reviewed or upgraded since.

To keep rivers, creeks and drainage running properly and culverts not being plugged, beaver control is essential in Grey County. But, a certified Trapper attempting to "break even" for his/her work and dedication – this 20 year old payment doesn't even cover the fuel in his/her vehicle – and certainly covers zero costs for their professional time & expenses of equipment.

As an example, Bruce County at the moment pays a \$30 bounty along with a \$60 per beaver trapping fee paid to the Trapper. These prices are under review to be increased along with the nuisance / threatening coyote problem in our area.

Coyotes are very over populated in both Grey & Bruce Counties – and they would be able to be managed by Trappers if the payment process was not so incredibly detailed. More often than not, Trappers are refused payment because of inspections, determinations, paperwork, etc, etc ! (Please review you coyote payment requirements !) Coyotes are not only killing and mauling the livestock of farmers, they are rapid in towns and cities and are frequently killing resident's cats & dogs.

This is exactly why the MNR wants Trappers to manage and control populations of wildlife – and for their hard work, expertise and costs ... they should be paid respectively to control the beaver and coyote populations.

If I may, here's an example of a very costly, in my opinion, Grey County beaver problem. Periodically, numerous culverts get plugged by beavers in Hwy 6, just South of the Wilcox Sideroad. Heavy equipment works for a couple days to unplug the culverts by pushing long logs through the culverts in an attempt to clear them so that the water flows and to prevent flooding. Beaver will plug those culverts again within a few days to hold water back to their lodges (beaver houses) right beside the road ! A simple solution is – hire a Trapper to manage the beaver population in that area – and there would be no future expense to clear the culverts ! I'm sure there are many other areas within the County that require attention also.

I would appreciate a reply from your perspective.
If you may require more information, please don't hesitate to contact me.
Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards:

Gary Stocking,

**Guardian Wildlife Control,
Wildlife Agent & Ontario Licensed Certified Trapper**

Serving Grey-Bruce & Surrounding Municipalities