

It is not legal to intentionally let your dogs "tear apart" a coyote in California. While coyotes are considered an unprotected "non-game" animal that can be hunted, the state's animal cruelty laws make it illegal to maliciously and intentionally torture or kill any living animal.

Here is a breakdown of the relevant laws and context:

- **California animal cruelty laws:** Penal Code §597(a) makes it a felony to maliciously and intentionally maim, mutilate, torture, wound, or kill any living animal. This applies to both domestic and wild animals, including coyotes. The act of purposefully allowing dogs to brutally kill another animal would fall under this statute.
- **Coyotes are unprotected:** California law classifies coyotes as non-game mammals, meaning they can be legally killed by licensed hunters at any time of year and in any number, with some restrictions. However, this "take" must be done lawfully and humanely. The unregulated status does not give permission for animal cruelty.
- **Hunting with dogs:** Although the use of dogs to hunt coyotes is legal in California, the practice of using dogs to fight and kill coyotes is not explicitly condoned by California Department of Fish and Wildlife regulations. It is considered an exploitation of a regulatory loophole, not legal dog-fighting.
- **The distinction matters:** The key legal distinction lies between legal hunting and intentional cruelty.
 - **Legal hunting** requires a hunting license and following all applicable regulations.
 - **Allowing dog fighting** or the intentional maiming and torture of an animal, even an unprotected one, is a criminal offense under animal cruelty laws.

For safety and to avoid legal issues, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends the practice of "hazing" to ward off coyotes. If you or a pet are in immediate danger, you can protect yourself. However, deliberately setting dogs on a coyote is illegal and is not a permitted form of pest control.