

## ANIMAL BOUNTIES

Town boards may offer a bounty for the destruction of gophers, ground squirrels, and coyotes.<sup>1</sup> The town board establishes the bounty by resolution, setting the amount offered for each animal, the times of year the bounty is available, and the geographic area in which the bounty is applicable.<sup>2</sup> A sample resolution is attached to this resource as **APPENDIX A**.

By operation of the statute, the board's bounty resolution is effective only in the calendar year in which the board adopts the resolution.<sup>3</sup> However, the town board may include an automatic renewal provision in the resolution, which allows the resolution to operate beyond the calendar year in which the board adopted the resolution. If the town board uses an automatic renewal provision, it should review the resolution and the bounty offered from time-to-time to ensure the resolution and payment amount reflect the current need for offering the bounty.

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### I. HOW TO CLAIM A BOUNTY

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To claim a bounty, the claimant must provide evidence of the killed animal and information requested by the town board or chair. For gopher bounties, the claimant must provide the four feet of any striped or gray gopher, or the two front feet of any pocket gopher, to the town board chair.<sup>4</sup> Towns in Olmsted County may require in their resolution that the claimant produces the tail of the gopher rather than the feet.<sup>5</sup> The town board chair must destroy the feet after receiving them.

There is no similar statutory requirement to produce physical evidence for squirrels or coyote bounty, so the board should set a policy for the evidence they would like to see when a claimant seeks the squirrel or coyote bounty.

#### Woodchuck Confusion?

Minn. Stat. § 348.13 refers to woodchucks in the explanation of what evidence must be presented when claiming a bounty. Despite that reference, towns may not offer a bounty on woodchucks. Woodchucks were removed as a bounty-eligible animal in 1974, but the reference to woodchucks remained in § 348.13 by mistake.

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<sup>1</sup> See Minn. Stat. §§ 348.12 (gophers and ground squirrels) and 348.125 (coyotes).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* (the bounty may be effective in all or only part of the town).

<sup>3</sup> Minn. Stat. § 348.12.

<sup>4</sup> Minn. Stat. § 348.13.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* (The statute provides the alternative of producing the tail of the gopher only to towns located in counties that had over 45,000 but less than 49,000 inhabitants per the 1950 federal census. Olmsted County is the only county within that population range in the 1950 census, so its towns are the only towns able to accept the gopher tail as an alternative.).

The claimant must also show the town board chair that they killed the animals within the area where the town offers the bounty. The town should require this demonstration because claimants seeking the bounty may kill an animal in one town but illegally present it to another town for payment since the second town offers a greater bounty. If possible, neighboring towns should coordinate their bounties, so each town offers the same or similar bounty. By coordinating with other towns, it is less likely that a claimant will seek a bounty outside of the area that the claimant killed the animal.

In determining if the claimant killed the animal in the area where the town offers a bounty, the board should set a policy for the required information. Many town boards ask only for the claimant's name and address, where they killed the animals, and the number and kind of each animal. However, the board may add other requirements, such as a statement the claimant did not trespass on property to kill the animals. The town board chair may ask questions about the claimant's ownership, occupation, or permission to be on the property where they killed the animals. If the claimant was not legally on the property where they killed the animals, it might be that they killed the animals either after trespassing or not within the township entirely. In either case, the chair may choose to investigate the claim before certifying the claim.

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## II. COUNTY BOUNTY

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County boards may also offer a bounty on gophers, squirrels, and coyotes. If the county board sets a bounty, the claimant is entitled to both the town's bounty and the county's bounty. The town board chair administers the county's bounty and decides if the claimant is entitled to the county's bounty.<sup>6</sup> This process means that even if the town does not offer a bounty on any animal, the town board chair may need to administer the county's bounty.

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## III. PAYING CLAIMS

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The payment process depends on whether the claimant seeks the township's bounty or the county's bounty. If the claimant seeks the bounty from both the town and county, the town board chair must administer both procedures.

### A. Paying the Town Bounty

The town board must adopt a process and rules for a claimant to receive payment from the town for the town's bounty. Regardless of the board's process and rules, the board and chair must keep accurate records about the claimed bounty, the number of each type of animal killed, the amount owed to each claimant, and the amount paid to each claimant by the town. One option is for the town board chair to issue a certificate to the claimant showing the amount the

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<sup>6</sup> Minn. Stat. § 348.13.

claimant is eligible to receive and allow the claimant to submit the certificate to the board and the regular claim for payment document at the next town board meeting. This process allows the chair to comply with their obligations to administer the bounty and helps with record-keeping by incorporating the payment process into the town's regular claim process.

**B. Paying the County Bounty**

Each month, the town board chair must issue a certificate to the County Auditor, showing the names of all persons entitled to a county bounty, the number of each kind of animal killed, and the amount payable to each claimant.<sup>7</sup> The County Auditor then issues a warrant on the county treasurer payable to the town board chair and pays the county's bounty to the claimants.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

\_\_\_\_\_ TOWNSHIP  
\_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY, MINNESOTA  
**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING AN ANIMAL  
BOUNTY IN THE TOWNSHIP**

**WHEREAS**, Minn. Stat. §§ 348.12, 348.125, and 348.13 authorize towns to offer a bounty for the destruction of gophers, ground squirrels, and coyotes;

**WHEREAS**, the town board determines gophers, ground squirrels, and coyotes constitute a nuisance to property, particularly property being used for agricultural purposes;

**WHEREAS**, the town board determines it is in the best interests of the public to establish a bounty to encourage the destruction of gophers, ground squirrels, and coyotes in the township;

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the town board of \_\_\_\_\_ Township establishes a bounty on gophers, ground squirrels, and coyotes in the township to be conducted as follows:

1. The bounty shall only apply to gophers, ground squirrels, and coyotes that were, to the satisfaction of the town board chair, captured and killed within the boundaries of the township.
2. [optional] The bounty shall only apply to gophers, ground squirrels, and coyotes killed in the months of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. To be eligible for collection of the bounty on a gopher, the four feet of striped and gray gophers, and both front feet of pocket gophers must be presented to the town board chair. To be eligible for the collection of the bounty on ground squirrels, \_\_\_\_\_ must be presented to the town board chair. To be eligible for the collection of the bounty on coyotes, \_\_\_\_\_ must be presented to the town board chair.
4. The person claiming a bounty must provide the town his or her name, address, and the location of where the animals were killed.
5. The amount of the bounty shall be;
- 6.
- 7.

**APPENDIX A**

**THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, this resolution shall automatically renew on January 1 of each year, unless amended or repealed by the town board by resolution.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

**By the \_\_\_\_\_ Town Board**

**Attested to by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Town Board Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Town Clerk