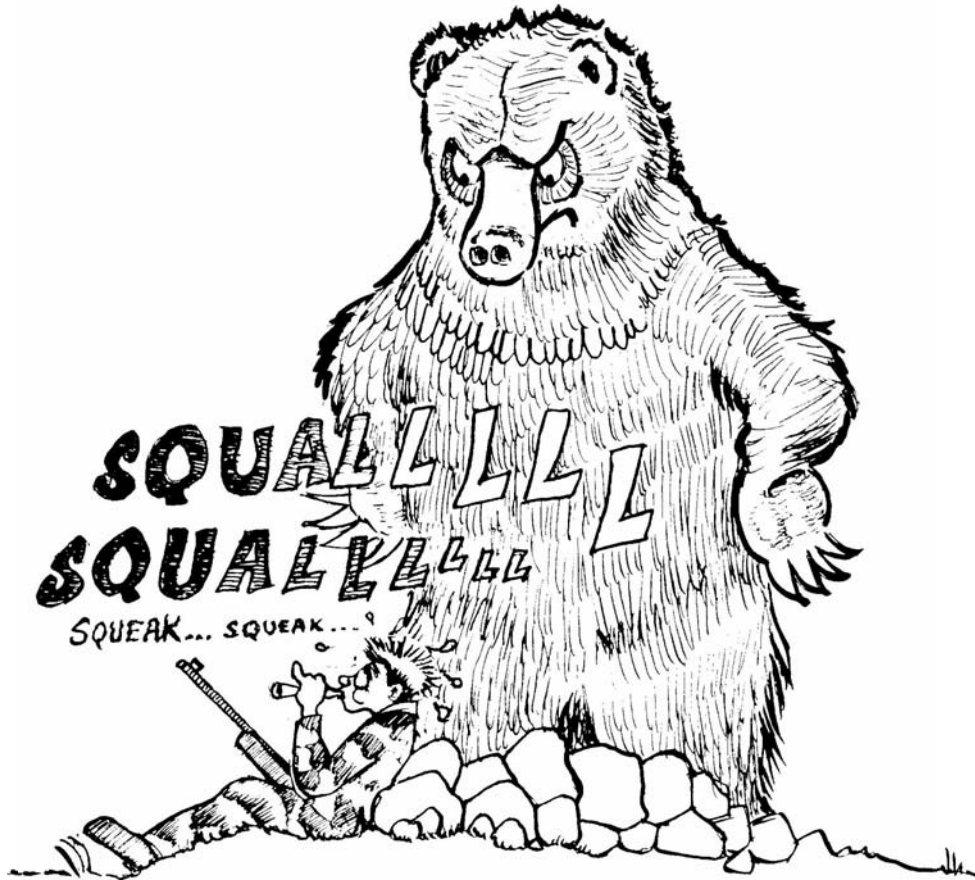


# How to Call

## Coyotes



PREDATOR CALLING : EXPECT THE  
UNEXPECTED



Portions of the text are taken from articles by F. Robert Henderson published in *Outdoor Life*, June, 1962 and *Sports Afield*, June, 1974 and also include contributions from Dr. Edward Kozicky and Mr. John Madson formerly of Winchester-Western Division, Olin Mathieson Corporation, East Alton, Illinois.

## Calling Coyotes

It is late afternoon; there is no wind; the air temperature has begun to chill. Two coyotes trot across an open flat; suddenly they stop; their large ears turn like miniature radar screens. From the hillside come the screams of a rabbit. Without hesitation the coyotes move in at a full gallop. They zero in on the spot where the sounds are coming from.

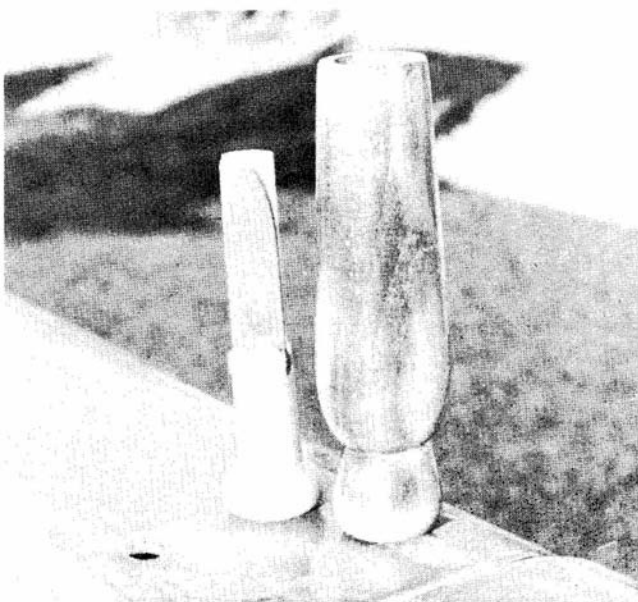
The sound of a dying rabbit is well known to all coyotes, for they hear it many times during their feeding activities. To the coyote, this sound means an injured animal is nearby and the predator rushes in, expecting an easy meal.

Calling can be an effective way for a person to take advantage of the habit of predators in order to get a good shot. If a coyote has killed your sheep or any other kind of livestock, you can call in that coyote and often get a good chance to shoot the coyote using this method.

Calling coyotes isn't hard to learn. The basics of coyote calling are patience and persistence. These lead to confidence and faith in your ability—and that's all-important on those days when you can't stir a coyote. It's something like fishing. There are times when fish will strike as fast as you can cast, and there are times when there doesn't seem to be a fish in the lake. The same applies to coyote calling. But the real hunter or fisherman expects such times. He just toughs them out, keeps working, and is on hand when things pick up again.

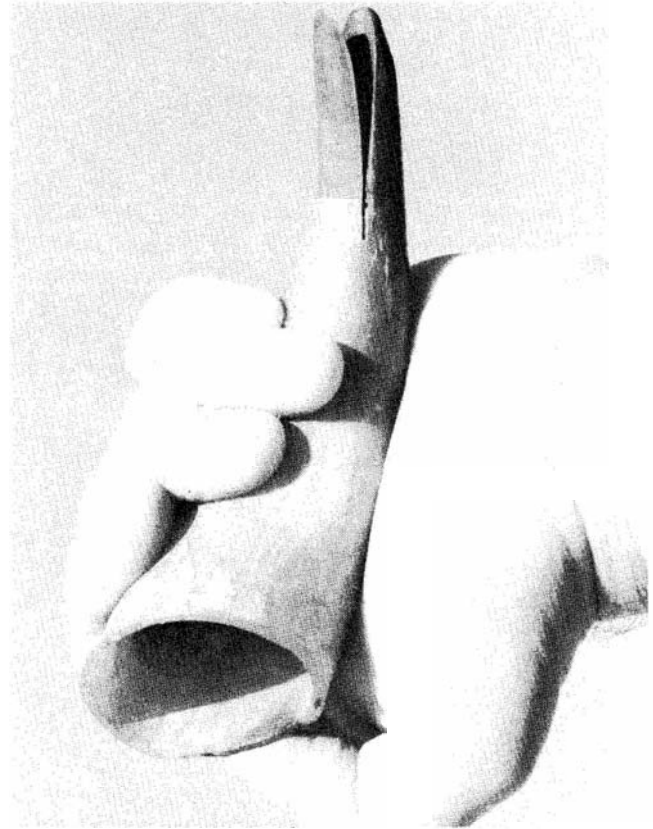
The best way to learn the coyote calling technique is to work and study with a master of the art, and then get plenty of practice. If you don't find a master coyote caller, the next best thing is to buy a record or tape of coyote calling and a mouth call from one of the many commercial outlets.

About 95 percent of the people who buy predator calls will try them a few times, with or without



reading the instructions, draw a blank, and then toss the predator call into the drawer full of other game calls that they've never learned to use. Give yourself a chance to learn.

There are three kinds of coyote calls: 1) the "open-reed" call, 2) the "closed-reed" call, and 3) the electronic call. There are different kinds of mouth calls, mostly homemade, that reproduce sounds other than injured rabbits and attract coyotes. One is a KiYi call, usually made out of a cow horn and a brass shim. This call mimics a coyote pup that is hurt. A howling coyote sound can also be mimicked with this call. Some commercial outlets sell calls that mimic a mouse. These are usually called "mouse squeakers."



The "Ki Yi" call has a brass reed.

This age of electronics has produced transistorized callers that are useful. One advantage of such a device lies in the fact that there are smart coyotes and there are dumb coyotes. As a rule, a coyote may be tricked only once with a given sequence of calls and will seldom be called in twice in the same way, and then only after a lapse of several months. A good tape or record call offers a variety of animal voices in distress and you can use these to trick call-shy coyotes.

Why does a coyote respond to a call that simulates the agonized bleats of a dying rabbit? Hunger is the logical reason, but may not always be the real

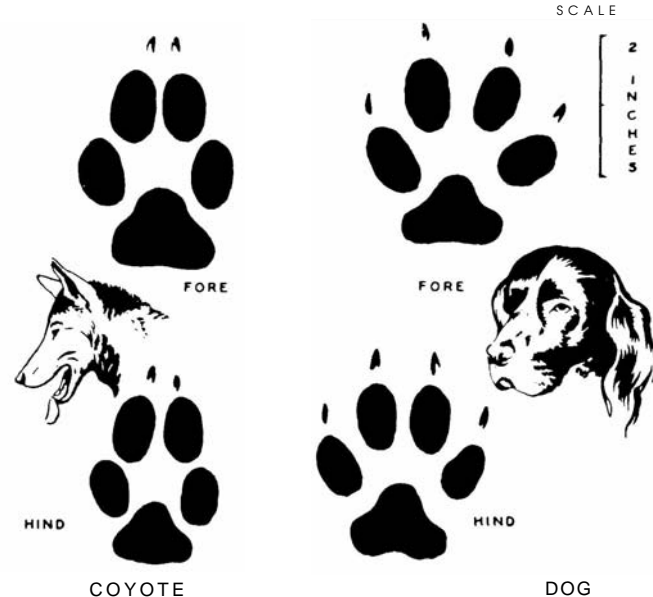
one. Coyotes may just want to know what's going on in their hunting territory even when they're not hungry. Curiosity is part of the coyote's professional hunting equipment, and it can be his undoing.

The best time to call coyotes is when you have time—although the first couple of hours after dawn and the last few hours before darkness are usually best. However, coyotes can be called any time.

At night, many of the coyotes responding to a call are never seen by the hunter, and you're never able to savor the thrilling approach of a distant coyote over open ground. Nor can you always be sure of the impact area of a rifle bullet. Besides, in many states, it is simply illegal to hunt at night with an artificial light.

The best months to call coyotes are September and October when their numbers are highest. The toughest time of the year to call is during February and March when the coyote numbers are low.

To find good areas for coyote calling, begin by obtaining permission to hunt on private land.



Look for coyote signs. A coyote track is usually egg shaped with the two front toenails pointing inward, and a set of coyote tracks in sand or snow is normally in a straight line. The best way to check for the presence of coyotes is to look for droppings and tracks along roads and trails the morning after a rain or fresh snowfall.

In choosing a hunting area, have some idea of the hunting pressure it's had. For example, hunting in open plains country, coyotes are likely to be found in big open pastures in early fall. Later on, after being chased by dogs and vehicles, they often begin using rougher terrain.

Camouflage clothing is well-worth the investment. Camouflage your face and hands too. Your face is like a mirror in the sun to a coyote. On snow,

you'll need white coveralls, white gloves, and a white stocking cap. You may want to apply some blocks and strips of white adhesive tape to your rifle and scope.

An important and critical step is your approach to the calling site. It's important to keep the wind in your favor. Always call into the wind. A coyote's sense of smell is keen and calling with the wind is a waste of time. Just accept the fact that the coyote's faculties are slightly supernatural, and operate accordingly.



All talking must cease before you get out of your vehicle and begin your approach. Ease the door closed; never slam it. Don't try to drive as close as possible to your hunting set-up. Leave your vehicle out of sight of the area in which you plan to do your calling. Park downwind from where you plan to hunt, and walk there into the wind. From now until you finish your final calling sequence, there must be no talking. Communicate with your buddies by hand signals. The hunter does well to sit among bushes or other cover tall enough to break his outline. In short cover, lie prone. On rocky hillsides sit in front of, not behind, a big boulder. Do the same with a thick clump of brush. From that position the hunter can watch in all directions without moving.

It's best to call by yourself. The more hunters on one stand the greater the chance for a fumble. A series of short notes on the call enables two hunters to signal each other without moving or speaking when an animal is sighted. The caller will be in charge; he will pick out the calling site, place

his companions, and after calling begins he will make all the decisions including when to stop calling.

If you walk around in the open, on hill tops, make noise, or let the animals get your scent, you're wasting your time.

## The Approach

Your approach to the calling site will vary with the location, but this is the general procedure to follow: First, figure out where the predator is likely to be and from which direction you expect him to come. Foxes and coyotes usually rest in cover during the day, sometimes on hillsides, in gullies, draws, or swales near the tops of hills. If the weather is cold, they're likely to lie in the sun; if it's hot they seek shade.

Go as directly and quietly as possible to the place where you will begin calling. Don't mill around and be indecisive. The longer you wander about, the greater the chance that coyotes within calling range will see you. When selecting a spot from which to call, never skyline yourself. Always keep below the horizon—preferably high on a slope or other overlook, but not on top of it. If the wind direction permits, sit with the sun at your back and take advantage of the shadows. Always have a good visual command of the area for about 180 degrees in front of you. Sit with your back against a rock or tree if you can, or lie down with your head propped on one hand to call and watch.

In prairie grass land areas never stand up while calling. Most animals fear any object that looks like a human standing but pay little attention to a caller in a sitting position, provided his clothing blends with the color of the ground cover and he remains absolutely motionless.

If you have companions, assign them sectors of the calling area and tell them to sit still and stay quiet. Be careful where each person sits. There is a danger in placement of people at the calling site. Sit close together so as not to risk shooting each other as the coyote runs in to investigate the sound.

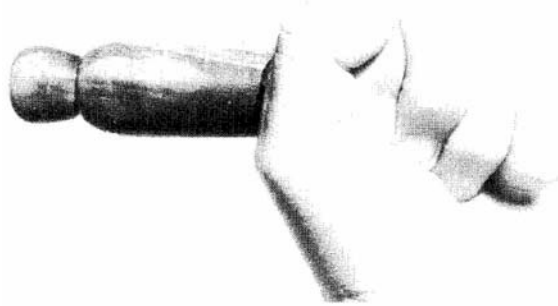
Any motion of caller or companions may spook a coyote instantly. A coyote responding to the call will have his attention riveted on the source of the noise.

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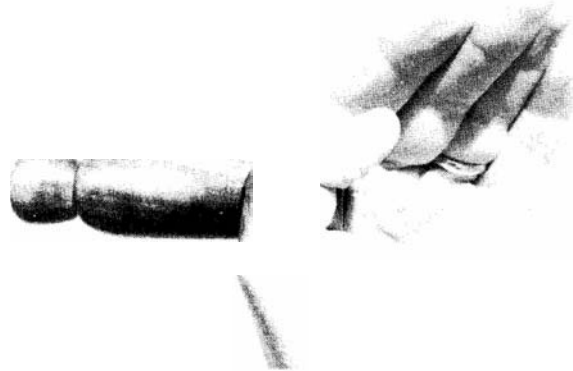
The actual calling is not as important as is your approach to the calling site. However, you should call in a realistic manner. Start off with a series of high-pitched screams that imitate a rabbit in mortal agony, blowing the call for about one minute or less. Then, after a short pause of less than two minutes, go through the sequence of calls again with less volume. This may fade into a series of weaken-

ing bleats with the hand cupping and uncupping over the call. Don't let a false note on the call bother you—just keep calling with the occasional pause. A rabbit fighting for his life doesn't always emit perfect screams and bleats.

Hold the end of the call between the base of your thumb and your forefinger. Practice opening and closing your four fingers over the end of the call. Bring the air through the call by huffing the air up from your diaphragm. Keeping your hand closed over the end of the call, force a moderate amount of air through the call in a steady stream in a single breath. Near the end of the single breath, open your four fingers up and abruptly stop the sound. Quickly close your fingers over the end of the call and start another cry of the rabbit.



The more pain, fright, and urgency you put into your calling, the more likely you are to bring in coyotes or other predators. Keep in mind the squalls of a rabbit struck by an owl. At the attack, the rabbit lets out a long loud scream of terror and hurt, **waaaaaa, waaaaaa, waaaaaa**, then breaks off into a series of short, gasping cries, **waaaa-waaaa-waaaa-waaaa**, and finally the cries fade to whimpers, **waaa-waaa-waa-wa-wa-wa**, and the calling dies away. The owl is likely to sink its talons in a new place in a minute or so, and then the rabbit squalls again.



The shortened calls should be repeated at intervals of half-a-minute to two minutes for the remainder of the stand.

It is important to remember that each breath of

the dying rabbit is a separate breath and you should mimic the squalls in separate breaths, **waaa-waaa-waaa-waaa**. But each squall or breath should be distinct. This is the most important part of actually calling.

One animal may come in sight a minute after you begin calling; the next may take his time. Most, but not all, coyotes and foxes show within 5 minutes. Much depends on terrain and cover. In heavy timber, remain at a stand 15 to 20 minutes; on open plains 20 to 45 minutes. Don't be in a hurry to quit. Many times I've left a stand only to look back when it was too late and see an animal coming in or sneaking away. And if a fox, coyote, or bobcat stops and turns back without coming into gun range, by all means call again. Often an animal can be coaxed into a return visit. Bobcats and raccoons are especially easy to call back.

Often, a coyote or coyotes (sometimes three or four) decide to respond to the calling on a dead run. Another time the coyote will be cautious and circle the caller, trying to get downwind of the "rabbit". Or, a coyote may simply materialize from nowhere. You blink, and there he is. You may see only his ears or catch a fleeting glimpse of him. And just for variety, you may be visited by badgers, foxes, owls, hawks, cattle, horses, dogs, bobcats, crows, or other people. So, be sure of your target. Do not shoot at coyotes on a skyline or any time you are unsure of the impact area for the shot.



Sometimes, you may see a coyote coming almost a mile away on open ground. The coyote may stop several hundred yards away. As soon as an animal is in sight, calling should cease and not be resumed as long as he continues to approach. If he stops, tease him with a few short gasping cries, cutting down the tone and volume as he gets closer. A few faint whimpers or squeaks at close range are likely to bring your visitor the rest of the way. Some hunters make a "kissing" sound by sucking on the back of their hand. This sound will often cause a coyote to move in closer. Don't be in a hurry to raise your weapon. Move only when he's out of sight or close enough for a shot.

And sometimes, as your eyes sweep the landscape, you'll simply notice something in the terrain

that wasn't there a moment before. On second look, it turns into a coyote sitting on his haunches watching you. Just freeze and let the coyote make the next move, especially if he's on the skyline where one jump will put him out of sight. His great curiosity will often move him in for a closer look. The biggest mistake most hunters make is to shoot at the predator when it is first spotted. You should wait for a sure shot. Even if you do not shoot, that particular coyote can be called on another day. If you shoot and miss, that coyote may be difficult to call in again.

In a territory where one predator dominates others, it is likely to charge out recklessly, while lesser animals make a cautious circle or two. For example, where there are no coyotes the red fox comes in boldly, but in coyote country the fox hangs back.

If there are two or more hunters, the caller should be the first to move after calling a sequence—but not until he's studied the landscape to be sure that the horizon hasn't grown some strange new bumps. The distance you should move to the next calling set-up varies with terrain, cover, and wind. A mile is the minimum distance to the next calling site.

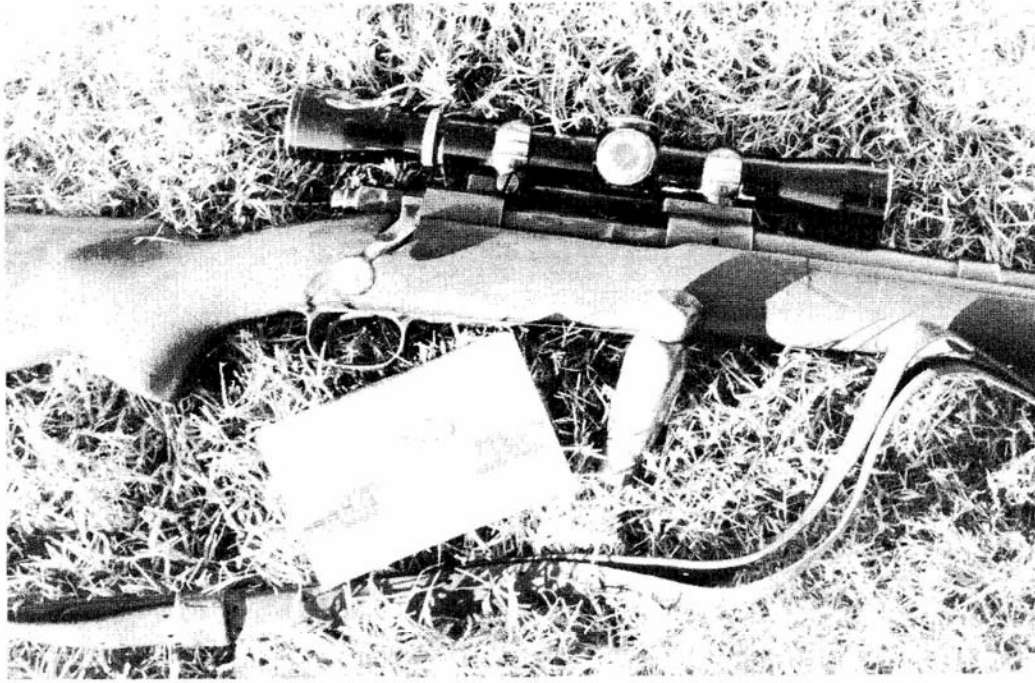
Wind is a critical factor in calling coyotes. A dead calm is ideal, but then the hunters must be extra-careful to make no noise. A light breeze isn't bad, and it helps to hide some of your mistakes. It becomes increasingly difficult to call into a wind over ten miles per hour. In responding to calls, coyotes don't seem to mind snowfall as much as rain, and they seem to move around on cloudy, foggy days.

## Coyotes Differ

Coyotes are true individuals. Like humans, they vary in intelligence and sharpness of senses. There are call-shy coyotes and trap-shy coyotes, just as there are coyotes that are suckers for traps and calls. It's hard to say how much coyotes learn from having escaped after being called in. There are probably many coyotes that cannot again be tricked in that way until those same coyotes have experienced hearing a real rabbit cry out, and have gotten a meal as a result. However, the only thing predictable about coyotes is that they'll do the unexpected far more often than not.

The prime essence of hunting for coyotes is with a mouth caller during the day, and using a rifle and/or a shotgun. All calls work, but stick with the one that works for you and in which you've developed confidence.

The best all-around choice of weapons among rifles is any .22, .23, or .24 caliber with an overall length (bullet case) of 2 inches or more. Popular cartridges are .220, .22-250, .25-06, .243, .244, or



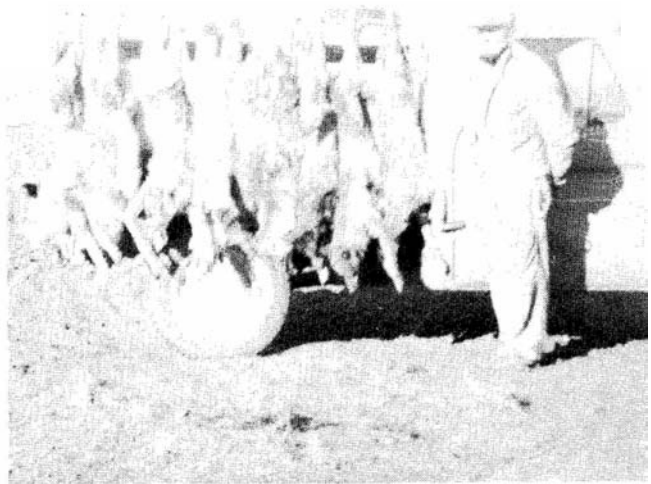
.257. A 4-power scope is perfectly adequate. Some hunters prefer iron sights. Both work well within their limits, and especially in close, brushy range. If two persons are working a calling site, it's a good idea for one of them to have a rifle and the other a 12 gauge shotgun loaded with No 4 buckshot. If only one person is hunting, a scope-sighted rifle is the best choice. However, there are three cardinal rules in such rifle-hunting: don't shoot at a coyote on the skyline no matter how tempting the shot may be, and before you shoot always check the impact area of the bullet beyond the coyote and be sure of your target identification.

Once you've grown proficient at calling, what kind of action can you expect? An average of one coyote called for every three set-ups is considered to be excellent. How good are your chances? In average country and under normal conditions the caller is doing well if he brings in an animal with every five to eight attempts. But under even favorable conditions, a person may call 20 to 30 different places without success, and then call from 5 stands in succession and bring in predators at each place. Much depends on how efficiently you work. If you can make 10 or 12 set-ups in a day's hunt, you've done well. The important thing is to be careful. Better 6 good set-ups than a dozen sloppy ones.

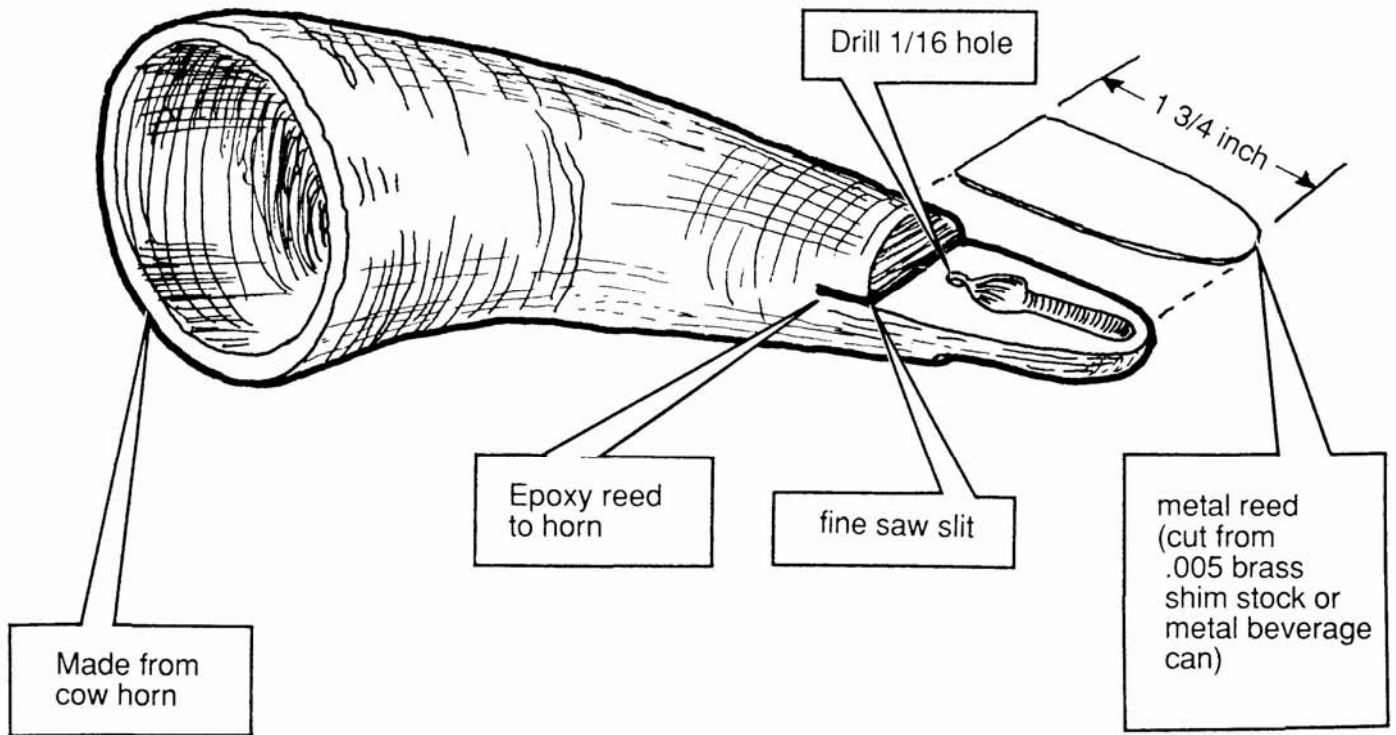
Coyote calling has gained great popularity in the past thirty years, for good reason. It is a constant challenge, with the deck stacked in favor of

the coyote, but the hunter has enough action to keep him on edge.

In closing, be sure you remember the crucial importance of **patience** and **persistence** until you've built up some confidence. There'll be days with no action and it's essential that the novice coyote caller realizes this, and accepts it as part of the game. Don't give up. The longer you hunt without seeing a coyote, the closer you are to some thrilling action.



# Pup or Kiyi Call



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