

Information Guide to Dealing with Coyotes

The coyote appears often in the tales and traditions of Native Americans—usually as a very savvy and clever beast. Modern coyotes have displayed their cleverness by adapting to the changing American landscape. These members of the dog family once lived primarily in open prairies and deserts, but now roam the continent's forests and mountains. They have even colonized cities like Los Angeles, and are now found over most of North America. Coyote populations are likely at an all-time high.

These adaptable animals will eat almost anything. They hunt rabbits, rodents, fish, frogs, and

even deer. They also happily dine on insects, snakes, fruit, grass, and carrion. Because they sometimes kill lambs, calves, or other livestock as well as pets, many ranchers and farmers regard them as destructive pests.

Coyotes are formidable in the field where they enjoy keen vision and a strong sense of smell. They can run up to 40 miles (64 kilometer) an hour. In the fall and winter, they form packs for more effective hunting.

Coyotes form strong family groups. In spring, females den and give birth to litters of three to twelve pups. Both parents feed and protect their young and their

territory. The pups are able to hunt on their own by the following fall.

Coyotes are smaller than wolves and are sometimes called prairie wolves or brush wolves. They communicate with a distinctive call, which at night often develops into a raucous canine chorus.

(Source: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com>)



Identification Guide: How do I know it's a Coyote?

The coyote, *Canis Latrans*, is a member of the dog family and are similar in appearance to a small-medium Collie dog. Males tend to be larger than females.

Coyotes have large erect pointed ears, a slender muzzle (see picture above) and a bushy tail. Fur color can vary widely. The color of the coyote's pelt varies from grayish-brown to yellowish-gray on the upper parts, while the throat and belly tend to have a buff or white color. A coyote's feet are relatively small in relation to the rest of the body. Thus their tracks are generally smaller, narrower, and more elongated than a normal dog print.

Ways to Discourage Coyotes

Generally, coyotes are reclusive animals who avoid human contact. Coyotes who've adapted to urban and suburban environments, however, may realize there are few real threats and approach people or feel safe visiting yards even when people are present. These coyotes have become habituated (lost their fear of humans), likely due to the ready availability of food in our neighborhoods. Sometimes, this food is deliberately provided by people who like to watch wild animals or misguidedly feel they are helping them by feeding. These bold coyotes should not be tolerated or enticed!

Hazing is a method that makes use of deterrents to move an animal out of an area or discourage an undesirable behavior or activity. Hazing can help maintain a coyote's fear of humans and deter them from neighborhood spaces such as backyards and play spaces.

Methods of Hazing:

Using a variety of different hazing tools is critical; coyotes can habituate to individual items, sounds, and actions.

- **Yelling and waving your arms:** The simplest method of hazing a coyote involves being loud and large: Stand tall, wave your arms and yell at the coyote until it runs away.

- **Noisemakers:** Voice, whistles, air horns, bells, soda cans filled with pennies or dead batteries, pots and pans banged together

- **Projectiles:** sticks, small rocks, cans, tennis balls, rubber balls

- **Other:** hoses, water guns with vinegar water, spray bottles with vinegar water, pepper spray, bear repellent, walking sticks

If a coyote has not been hazed before, he may not immediately run away when you yell at him. If this happens, you may need to walk towards the coyote and increase the intensity of your hazing.

The coyote may run away, but then stop after a distance and look at you. It is important to continue to haze the coyote until he completely leaves the area. You may need to use different tactics, such as noisemakers, stomping your feet, or spraying the coyote with a hose, to get him to leave.

Coyotes are skittish by nature and as a rule do not act aggressively towards aggressive people. However, engaging animals that are sick or injured can result in unpredictable behavior.

If you suspect that a coyote is sick or injured, contact the proper

authorities and DO NOT interact with the coyote.

Tips for Success:

- The more often an individual coyote is hazed, by a variety of tools and techniques and a variety of people, the more effective hazing will be for changing behavior.
- The coyote being hazed must be able to recognize that the potential threat is coming from a person. (Hiding behind a bush and throwing rocks, for example, will not be effective.)
- Techniques and tools can be used in the same manner for one animal or multiple animals. Usually there is a dominant animal in the group who will respond, and others will follow her lead.
- Certain levels of hazing must always be maintained so that future generations of coyotes do not learn or return to unacceptable habits or behaviors.
- Removing attractants, proper pet care and safety, and understanding coyote behavior are critical parts of addressing a problem coyote.

(Source: <http://www.humanesociety.org>)

Keeping your Pet Safe

Cats and small dogs may be seen as prey to the coyote, while larger dogs could be injured in a confrontation. To avoid these situations consider the following:

Fence your yard. The fence must be at least six feet tall with the bottom extending at least six inches below the ground. Fences can be made more effective by outwardly flaring the top of the fence. Please be sure

to check your local subdivision ordinances and City regulations prior to construction.

Keep companion animals in at night. Coyotes are primarily nocturnal.

Keep cats indoors where they are also safe from cars, other animals and from getting lost.

Don't leave pet food outside.

Spay or neuter your dogs. Coyotes are attracted to and can mate with unsterilized domestic dogs.

Trapping and relocation of coyotes is not recommended except as a last resort. Disruption of family packs can cause orphaned juveniles to seek easy prey, such as small dogs and cats, and other coyotes may move into the vacated area.

(Source: <http://www.wihumane.org/wildlife/coyotes>)

How do I Keep Coyotes out of my Yard

Unfortunately, Coyotes tend to be drawn to urban and suburban neighborhoods for two reasons: human encroachment into native habitat and the availability of food. While there is no 100% fail-safe way to keep Coyotes out of your yard, the following steps help to prevent coyotes from being attracted to your home:

- One unique solution is wolf urine. Wolf urine is successful because wolves are one of coyotes few natural predators, and coyotes will avoid areas where the presence of wolves is sensed. In other communities, wolf urine has been placed around where coyotes have been spotted, and has been reported as a successful deterrent thus far.
- Whether its done intentionally or unintentionally it is important that you DO NOT FEED COYOTES! Secure garbage cans by fastening lids with rope or bungee cords
- Dispose of especially attractive food wastes such as meat, cheese and eggs by adding a small amount of ammonia to the garbage bag before placing outside.
- Limit sources of water, such as bird baths and water features, if possible.
- When composting, use enclosed bins rather than exposed piles. Avoid adding dog or cat waste, meat, milk or eggs to compost.
- If you have fruit trees, pick the ripe fruit and keep fallen fruit off the ground.
- Motion sensing lights or sprinklers may help to deter coyotes from your yard.
- Bird feeders should be positioned so that coyotes cannot get access to the seed.
- Provide secure shelter for or other outdoor pets.
- Clear bushes and weeds away from your home. Dense vegetation provides attractive habitat for animals on whom coyotes prey.

Are Coyotes Here to Stay?

The Short Answer is Yes.

Coyotes have adapted well to urban environments across the state and nation, because city environments are abundant in shelter and food sources. Most coyotes prey upon small mammals like rabbits and mice; however, in urban environments they also prey upon plentiful and easy food sources like geese, squirrels, eggs, fawns, garbage, and sometimes small, domesticated pets.



Eradication programs in many cities have resulted in prolonged and expensive failures. The eradication efforts may get rid of individual animals, but the coyote habitat remains. New coyotes will move into the area to take the place of the eradicated coyote. Other coyotes will quickly move into the area to take advantage of the bountiful food and shelter sources. Eradication efforts like hunting and trapping are effective ways to get rid of trouble or dangerous animals, but will not completely rid the area of all coyotes.

If residents follow the simple steps and recommendations outlined in this document, they can significantly reduce the risk that they or their pets will have a negative encounter with a coyote.

Managing Coyote Population

Unfortunately, eradication/culling programs in many cities have resulted in expensive and prolonged failures. While the eradication program may get rid of individual animals, the general coyote habitat remains in place and new animals simply move into the area.