



# Most Commonly Asked Questions About Urban Coyotes



## 1.) Why Are Coyotes Here In The City?

Coyotes have always been in the city, but reports of conflicts are on the rise. Residential areas provide habitat (food, water, shelter and space) for coyotes. Plentiful food sources exist such as mice, rabbits, squirrels, and voles. Urban coyotes have also learned to take advantage of the ample human-associated foods, such as garbage, pet food, bird seed and compost piles. Some coyotes have also learned that unattended pets are an easy food source. Shelter and water can be found in parks, yards and natural areas.

## 2.) Why Are Conflicts On The Rise?

Coyotes have learned to thrive in many urban areas. (Refer to #3, *Can't These Coyotes Be Captured And Taken Back Where They Belong?*) Coyotes have adapted to the easy life cities provide and as they continue to habituate (lose their natural wariness of people due to ample habitat and close proximity to people without negative consequences), coyote conflicts are likely to increase. It only takes one coyote (or one group of coyotes with "bad" behavior) to cause problems within your neighborhood. And unfortunately, one person in your neighborhood leaving attractants out or intentionally feeding coyotes or other wildlife can create that "bad" behavior. Thus, minimizing conflicts typically requires a two-prong approach: 1.) Educating residents on how their actions influence coyote behavior, and 2.) Getting a community commitment to remove attractants and haze coyotes that approach people too closely.

## 3.) Can't These Coyotes Be Captured And Taken Back Where They Belong?

Urban coyotes are where they belong. Multiple generations of coyotes have been born and raised in cities and have adapted to the easy life (ample habitat with little to no human hazing) cities provide them. Although there are varying opinions on whether coyotes should be in the city, the reality is cities provide (and always will) the habitat required to support coyote populations.

## 4.) What Attracts Coyotes To My Yard Or Neighborhood?

Availability of their natural food sources and ample access to garbage, pet food, and birdfeeders attracts coyotes to our neighborhoods. In addition, some residents illegally place food out for coyotes, which compounds the problem. Some coyotes have also discovered pets are easy prey. Because sport trapping was banned in Colorado by ballot initiative and hunting is not feasible in cities, urban areas are safe-havens for coyotes. Very few residents and neighborhoods take steps to deter or haze coyotes away from them. As more and more coyotes have been welcomed into the city and adapted to the presence of humans, they have also lost their natural wariness of us. Thus, it is easier for a coyote to make a living in urban areas than elsewhere.

## 5.) What Should I Do If I Am Approached By A Coyote?

Do not run or turn your back on a coyote. Be as big and loud as possible. Wave your arms, clap your hands and throw objects at the coyote. Shout in a loud authoritative voice. If the coyote does not leave the area, face the coyote and slowly back away.

## **6.) There Are Too Many Coyotes In The City. Can't We Reduce Their Numbers?**

Cities provide ample habitat for coyotes. They have adapted to not only live, but to thrive, in residential communities. The availability of habitat dictates how many coyotes are in an area. With collaborative efforts, we can influence people's actions and coyote behavior. It's important to know your city is not the only place dealing with coyote conflicts. Many eradication programs have been attempted in other North American cities and all have proven expensive failures. Even the best eradication efforts cannot remove all the coyotes and research has proven such eradication will cause the remaining coyotes to increase reproduction, creating larger litters. Thus, removal programs lead to increased reproduction by the remaining coyote populations and populations quickly meet or exceed pre-control numbers. "To suppress a coyote population over the long term, more than 75% of the coyotes would need to be removed annually." (Connolly & Longhurst 1975)

## **7.) Why Can't Colorado Parks And Wildlife (CPW) Just Kill The Coyotes That Are Killing Our Pets?**

It can be difficult to accept, but some pets can be seen as a food source to coyotes and large dogs can be seen as a threat to their territory. Unattended pets may be at risk. Responsible pet ownership is key in reducing coyote conflicts. Lethal control of coyotes preying on pets may be undertaken by landowners or city and county agencies. State law allows landowners to take (kill) coyotes that are causing damage/conflicts on their land. Be aware cities and counties may have more restrictive ordinances and laws. CPW in the Denver area may intervene and attempt lethal action on coyotes posing a threat to human safety. For information on the state laws regarding personal property and pets, please contact CPW. Please refer to #8, *How Can I Protect My Pets?*

## **8.) How Can I Protect My Pets?**

Keep your pet(s) current on vaccines.

Cat Owners: The best way to guarantee your cat's safety is to keep it indoors. Cats allowed to roam face potential death from cars, diseases, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, dogs, birds of prey (such as owls), and people.

Dog Owners: Always supervise your pets outside, especially at dawn and dusk. If you must leave your dog outside, secure it in a fully enclosed kennel. Keep your pets on a short leash and never let them interact or play with wildlife. Avoid known or potential den sites and thick vegetation where coyotes may seek cover. Pick up small dogs when coyotes are visible.

## **9.) Can I Kill The Coyote That Keeps Coming Into My Yard?**

State law allows landowners to take (kill) coyotes that cause damage/conflicts on their land. Cities and counties may have more restrictive ordinances and laws prohibiting the use of a firearm. Coyotes are very difficult to catch in a live trap, but this may be an option available within the city limits. However, relocation is not an option, thus the coyote would have to be killed once captured. Some cities may give exemptions for the discharge of firearms or some private trappers may be licensed for lethal injection. In the metro area, it may be possible to contract with a private trapper who has a CPW permit (to remove coyotes caught in a live trap out of the city and into an unincorporated area where the discharge of firearms is lawful) to help with euthanasia. Your local city or county may have additional tools or resources available for you.

## **10.) How Do I Protect My Children?**

Educate your children about the presence of urban wildlife and teach them to NEVER approach any animal, wild or domestic, they don't know. Teach them the steps mentioned under #5, *What Should I Do If I am Approached By A Coyote?*, by teaching them to be S.M.A.R.T: S – Stop and don't run; M – Make yourself look bigger; A – Announce yourself (yell leave me alone!); R – retreat by backing away slowly; T – tell an adult.

### **11.) When Are Coyotes A Risk To Me?**

Coyotes are naturally curious but are usually timid animals and run away if confronted. If a coyote is too close or approaches you, scare/haze it away. Refer to #5, *What Should I Do If I Am Approached By A Coyote?* If a person is injured or attacked by a coyote, please call 911 immediately. Coyotes that exhibit dangerous behavior towards people (such as raising its hackles, baring its teeth, or growling) should be reported to CPW. Although rare, there are documented human attacks by coyotes. Most of these have been in association with coyotes being fed by people. Please see #12, *Is it Legal to Feed Coyotes?*

### **12.) Is It Legal To Feed Coyotes?**

CPW prohibits the feeding of coyotes in cities and discourages the feeding of ALL wildlife. There are some cities in the surrounding Denver metro area that have additional ordinances against the feeding of wildlife. Coyotes that associate humans with food may become demanding, aggressive, and unpredictable. Please report individuals feeding coyotes to CPW.

### **13.) What CPW Resources Are Available To Help Me And My Neighbors?**

CPW has educational/outreach products such as informational brochures, posters, signs, and other handouts. The local District Wildlife Manager may assist in their respective jurisdictions by meeting with Home Owners' Associations and attending community meetings. CPW can provide interested parties/local governments with information on the use of hazing and other non-lethal methods for deterring coyotes. Volunteers may assist with educating the public by distributing information and helping at educational outreach events. CPW partners with local jurisdictions to protect human safety. Please contact CPW if you want more information on how you can help disseminate coyote information in your neighborhood.

### **14.) I Have Observed Coyotes In My Neighborhood And Now I Am Afraid To Go Outside. What Can I Do?**

We live in a state with rich and diverse wildlife resources -- that's why many people choose to call Colorado home. Coyotes live statewide, so whether you live inside or outside of the city, you may see or encounter a coyote. Having a general understanding of coyotes and other urban wildlife may help minimize some of the fears you may have. Being prepared and educating yourself about local wildlife may also relieve some of the concerns you have. Refer to # 13, *What CPW Resources Are Available To Help Me And My Neighbors?* Some steps you can take to minimize a coyote encounter could include being aware of your surroundings and carrying a walking stick or other deterrent. Deterrents can include rocks, vinegar in a water gun, paintballs, airhorns or a repellent spray (such as Citronella or pepperspray). Contact your local authorities to ensure you are using a legal method.

### **15.) My Neighbor Was Bitten By A Coyote While Walking His Dog. What Should He Do?**

If a person is injured by a coyote, call 911 immediately. Any coyote displaying aggressive behavior towards people should be reported immediately to the CPW office. Refer to #11, *When Are Coyotes A Risk To Me?*

### **16.) Why Not Sterilize Coyotes?**

Although this method may sound like an easy task, it is not. Coyotes are very intelligent and are not an easy predator to live trap. Some sterilization baits are being developed but their effectiveness has not been proven. Placing these baits out in the city could impact other wildlife and pets. Past studies show sterilization of coyotes is very costly, outweighing the limited results. New techniques are becoming available and further research is needed.

## **17.) Can Coyotes Be Trapped And Relocated?**

CPW does not allow the relocation of coyotes for many reasons. Studies show coyote relocation is not effective and a relocated coyote will often travel (and can trek up to 300 linear miles) back to their capture site (Gehrt, 2006). Relocation is stressful and unsuccessful for a coyote (chances are it will be moved to another coyote's territory) and can also pose a risk to personnel. Disease spread is also a consideration with wildlife relocation. Coyotes may be live trapped on private property but must be killed once captured. Trapping is a short term fix; removing a coyote simply opens territory for other coyotes to move in. This practice is on-going, costly, and ineffective. If you do not remove the attractants, you will not remove the problem. Refer to #6, *There Are Too Many Coyotes In The City. Can't We Reduce Their Numbers?*

## **18.) I Am Worried Because I Saw A Coyote Right Next To A School. What Can Be Done?**

Children should be educated about coyotes and other urban wildlife. Refer to #10, *How Do I Protect My Children?* Coyotes are numerous in cities and residential areas where schools are plentiful. The mere presence of a coyote near a school does not equate to a human threat. However, if coyotes are exhibiting aggressive behavior toward humans, please notify CPW or local authorities immediately.

## **19.) Are There Additional Helpful Resources?**

Some additional CPW resources you can refer to include the following:

- *Your Guide to Avoiding Human-Coyote Conflicts*, (CPW NE Regional Service Center Coyote Brochure, 2009)
- *Coyote Home Audit Checklist*, (CPW handout, Area 5)
- *Nuisance Wildlife Laws in Colorado*, (CPW handout, Area 5)
- *Coyote Exclusions, Deterrents and Repellents* (CPW handout, Area 5)

## **20.) Where Can I Go To Get More Information?**

If you have additional questions or concerns about wildlife, or to request additional information, contact CPW at (303) 291-7227. You can also visit our website at [www.wildlife.state.co.us](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us).