



California Wildlife Center

Coyote Coexistence Guidelines

Food, water and shelter for wildlife are abundant in urban areas. Wildlife can travel with relative ease utilizing manmade structures (roads, canals, alleys, drainages, etc.) and connect to areas with food, water, shelter and space.

Coyote Diet

Coyotes are opportunistic omnivores. They will consume carrion, berries, insects and vegetables as well as rodents. Studies have shown that an individual coyote may eat as many as 5,000 mice per year with lactating females consuming up to 50% more. Prey species have been characterized as 'anything they can catch' however multiple studies of stomach contents of urban coyotes reveal small rodents as the principle food, along with rabbits, hares, waterfowl, cats, small dogs, human food and garbage. Coyotes are not large in stature and do not have the attributes of animals capable of taking down larger prey, though they have been known to take down small deer.

- Do not feed coyotes! Encourage your neighbors not to feed coyotes or leave anything out that might attract the animals.
- Do not feed wildlife! If you must feed birds, position bird feeders so coyotes can't get the feed. Be sure to clean any fallen seed from the ground. Be aware that birds and rodents that come to eat the feed will also attract coyotes (in addition to other forms of wildlife). Bread and table scrapes are also attractants.
- Feed all pets indoors. If you must feed your pets outside, do not leave uneaten food outside. This becomes an easy meal for a coyote.
- Eliminate outside sources of water (pet food bowls, cover pools, fountains, koi ponds, etc.)
- Pick ripe fruit from trees and collect fallen fruit. The fruit itself is an attractant, as well as the other wildlife/rodents that will also consume the fruit.
- Clear brush and dense weeds from around dwellings. This will reduce the protective covering for coyotes and make the area less attractive to rodents. Coyotes, as well as other predators, are attracted to areas where rodents are concentrated.
- Use compost bins with secure lids.
- Coyotes are known to eat domestic cats. For the health and safety of the cats, as well as the threats to other wildlife that cats create, keep cats indoors. Feral populations of cats are known to attract coyotes, as well as the food that is left for them.
- Coyotes will feed on human refuse. Never discard edible garbage where coyotes can get to it. Maintain garbage cans properly and make sure lids are securely fastened. Sprinkling ammonia or cayenne pepper into the garbage can may discourage scavenging. Put out trash containers on the morning of pickup, not the night before.

- Erect walls and fences where possible. Fences should be at least 6 feet tall and secured at least 6" below ground. Coyote Rail Roll Guards (Coyote Rollers) can also be installed to aid in keeping coyotes out (coyoteroller.com).
- Elimination of rodents via toxic poisons to potentially affect coyote activity should never be used. Hawks, Owls, Bobcats, Mountain Lions, Opossums, Raccoons and Coyotes can all be affected by Secondary Rodenticide Toxicity (consuming prey that has consumed the poison). Domestic dogs, cats and even children have also inadvertently consumed poison left out for rodents with deadly consequences.
- Make sure that chickens and livestock are secured in predator-proof enclosures with strong gauge wiring. Light-weight 'chicken wire' cages are only meant for keeping animals in, and will not prevent a predator from entering.

Coyote Behavior

Coyotes are traditionally most active at dawn and dusk. However, numerous studies have also shown that they can, and do, become nocturnal in human-occupied spaces. Their increased activity at night is seen as a way to avoid conflict with humans (i.e., coyotes change their peak level of activity to coincide with decreased human activity). Conversely, coyotes may also be frequently seen during 'daylight' hours as well.

Coyotes in urban areas tend to have a smaller territory due to the high volume of resources available to them.

Coyotes do become habituated to human presence and to hand-feeding by humans. They lose their fear when they realize that a safe source of calories is easy to acquire. Most urban coyotes lack an intense fear of humans due to their close proximity.

- Keep small pets and children indoors unless directly supervised. Try to avoid outside activity with them during dawn, dusk and night when coyotes are most active. If it is necessary to leave a small pet outside unattended, keep it in a sturdy enclosure with a roof.
- When walking dogs, keep them on a short leash and avoid using retractable leashes.
- Install motion-detecting lights around the perimeter of the house.
- Make your human-presence known! Tape recorded human noises, moth balls and ammonia soaked rags strategically placed around the property may help to deter predators from entering your yard.
- Haze coyotes at all opportunities in a consistent manner! Use noise, throw rocks, spray with a garden hose to discourage them. For everyone's safety it is essential that coyotes maintain their natural wariness of humans.
 - Make loud noises
 - Shout and bang pots/pans or rattle empty soda can with pennies/small rocks in it.
 - Wave your hands or objects like sticks and brooms.
 - Spray the coyote with a hose.
 - Throw small stones or cans (do not attempt to hit/injure the coyote with projectiles).
 - Use a commercial repellent, if necessary, on bold animals that refuse to leave.

- DO NOT turn away or run because the coyote may view it as an opportunity to chase. It may also negatively affect the success of future hazing on this coyote.
- Keep eye contact.
- Keep all dogs on a short leash. If you are walking your small dog and are approached by a coyote, pick up your dog and proceed with hazing techniques.

Coyote Aggression and Communication

Coyotes are territorial with communication as the first choice of defense strategy, usually delivered via scent-marking and vocalizations. If scent markings and vocalizations are ignored defense tactics can escalate to include posturing as well as chasing and nipping. Fighting is rare.

In situations with dog/coyote conflicts, fights usually occur because the dog has failed to respond appropriately to and be respectful of the coyote's territorial communication (which is also unknown to the owner). Coyotes may also consider large or loud dogs to be a threat to their territory and become aggressive.

In the event of coyote/dog interactions, removing the dog from the territory can alleviate the danger.

Coyote Reproduction

An average pack size is 4 to 7 individuals. In a process known as controlled ovulation, only the alpha male and alpha female in a pack will breed, resulting in 4 – 6 pups per year (born in April/May) which generally begin to disperse in the Fall.

- There is generally more than one den set up in a home range. If then den is in an unsuitable location, creating a mock 'disturbance' to an active den can coerce the coyotes to move the pups to an alternate location (shovel to gently disturb the entrance, a pair of dirty socks left at the entrance, or more aggressively sprinkling adult male urine/commercial ammonia around entrance).
- Spay or neuter your pets! Coyotes are attracted to the scent of unspayed/unneutered domestic dogs. Unspayed female dogs will attract male coyotes, and unneutered male dogs can be lured away by the scent of an ovulating female coyote (and potentially killed by male cohorts).