

# Coyote Management



## Responding to Urbanized Coyotes

Coyote sightings have become more frequent in the Alamo Heights community giving concern for the safety of residents and pets. The patchwork of parks, open areas, and the Olmos Basin wilderness offers a habitat the urbanized coyote is adept at exploring. This habitat provides coyotes and other wild animals plentiful sources of food, water, and shelter. Large rodent populations, accessible garbage and plenty of green spaces are all reasons why coyotes call the Olmos Basin area home.

Despite lethal approaches to controlling coyote populations, urbanized coyotes continue to thrive. Trapping and poisoning programs are not practical in urban areas because they cannot discriminate between coyotes, children, pets and other wildlife. These programs expose all of them to the same risk.

Studies have shown lethal control can disrupt the pack hierarchy and cause pack members to disperse temporarily. However, this practice allows more coyotes to reproduce and encourages larger litter sizes due to decreased competition for food and habitat.

### Discouraging Coyotes

Urbanized coyotes lose their fear of humans as they associate human habitat as a source of food, water, and shelter. The following steps can help to discourage coyotes from residential areas.

- Tightly secure trash can lids. Store trash cans in sheds, garages or other enclosures.
- Put trash out in secure trash cans the morning of trash pick-up, not the night before.
- Never leave or store pet food outside.
- Keep all outdoor grills clean.
- Store compost in well secured bins or avoid adding vegetables or other food items to open bins. Small mammals feeding in open bins may attract coyotes.
- Pick ripe fruit off trees, keep fruit off the ground, and fence vegetable gardens or use a green house.
- Install motion sensor outdoor lighting or sprinkler systems.

- Clear brush and dense foliage where coyotes may find shelter or small animals to feed upon.
- Close off crawl spaces under porches, decks, and sheds.
- Fence your property or yard. Existing fence can be augmented with a coyote roller system made of PVC piping that is free to spin around a tight wire making it difficult for coyotes to pull themselves up and over.

NOTE: Coyote roller systems installed above a six foot fence will require a variance. Please contact the Community Development Office at (210) 826-0516 for more information about obtaining a variance.

### Pet Safety

Coyotes will prey on outdoor cats and small dogs. Recognizing the risk is the first step toward preventing conflict between coyotes and your pet. Pets have been reportedly taken from backyards, open spaces and even right off the leash in other areas. The following are recommendations to reduce the risk to your pets:

- Keep pets inside at night. Do not teather pets if it is necessary to leave them outside.
- Do not allow pets to roam unsupervised, especially near wooded areas.
- When walking dogs, keep them on a short leash when outside and avoid extension leashes. Keep your dog walking in front of you; if your dog stops, keep an eye on it.
- Coyotes pose less risk to medium-to-large sized dogs. However, keep larger dogs on a leash and discourage your dog from feeling comfortable with coyotes by preventing it from "playing" or interacting with a coyote.
- The only way to guarantee your cat's safety is to keep it indoors. Removing coyote attractants from your yard and neighborhood will reduce the probability of a coyote visiting your home.

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## Coyote Encounters

Although naturally curious, coyotes are usually timid animals and normally run away if challenged. Coyotes can be a risk to people if they have become comfortable around humans, usually as the result of feeding.

It is not normal for coyotes to attack or pursue humans, especially adults; it is a learned response to human behavior. You can discourage coyotes from feeling comfortable around you by responding to their presence and eliminating coyote attractants (food sources) from your yard and neighborhood.

Coyotes should not feel comfortable around people or their homes. If a coyote is comfortable in your neighbor's yard, it is also comfortable in your yard, around your children and your pets. If you see a coyote in your neighborhood, you should do your best to make it feel unwelcome. You can discourage coyotes from hanging around your home by scaring coyotes off your property.

- Never attempt to tame a coyote.
- Do not turn your back or run from a coyote.
- If followed or approached by a coyote, make loud noises and make yourself look big.
- If necessary, throw sticks or rocks to discourage coyotes.
- Move toward active or populated areas.
- Always keep yourself between a coyote and small children or pets.
- If walking where there are coyotes, carry a deterrent such as an air horn, whistle or walking stick.
- Because coyotes use the same trails and travel at the same time of day or night, consider periodically changing your walking schedule and routes.
- Feeding of non-predatory wildlife and feral cats in areas frequented by coyotes is highly discouraged. Coyotes will adapt to this opportunity for an easy meal and may provoke an unwanted encounter with a human.

## Do Not Feed Coyotes

Coyotes in the urban environment have an adequate food supply and are capable of surviving in this environment without our help. In fact, by feeding coyotes you put yourself, your neighborhood and the coyote at risk. A coyote that becomes dependent on humans for food may become too bold around humans, bite someone and have to be destroyed.

Section 4-51, Restrictions, of the City Codes prohibits feeding or attracting of predatory wildlife. Section 4-51 reads as follows:

*"It shall be unlawful for any person on public or private property to attract or feed any wild animal or bird considered to be a predatory species to include, but not limited to, raccoons, opossums, skunks, coyotes, fox, hawks, and owls which ordinarily live in a state of nature without the aid or care of humans."*

If people are still feeding coyotes, intentionally or unintentionally, and allowing them to feel comfortable around homes, people and pets, problem coyotes will occur over and over.

## Why Co-Exist With Coyotes?

Coyotes have adapted to urban lifestyles because city environments support them. The majority of coyotes continue to feed primarily on the thousands of mice and rats in the Olmos Basin area. Solutions to successful co-existence can frequently be found in simple alterations in human behavior as recommended in this newsletter. Additionally, proactive, collaborative public outreach is necessary to ensure that all residents do what they can to prevent coyote conflicts.

**Coexistence is not an option if an individual coyote has threatened a person.** Any aggressive coyote will be removed from the area. However, even after a problem coyote has been removed, the environment and human behavior that led to the coyote's actions remain.

**Please report coyote sightings (location, time, number of animals, and apparent condition of the animals) to the Alamo Heights Police Dispatch at (210) 822-3321. Reported sightings will assist us in maintaining accurate records of our coyote population and their activities. This information will further assist us in predicting movement patterns should targeted intervention be required.**



For more information on urbanized coyotes, please visit the following website.

"Urban Coyote Ecology and Management, The Cook County, Illinois Coyote Project"

[www.co.lake.il.us/health/pdfs/ehs/UrbanCoyotes.pdf](http://www.co.lake.il.us/health/pdfs/ehs/UrbanCoyotes.pdf)