

Frequently Asked Questions



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What should I do if a coyote approaches me?

The most successful methods of frightening a coyote away from a person are for that person to appear as large and threatening as possible. Making aggressive gestures towards the animal (moving arms and legs), shouting in a low voice, throwing rocks, sticks or objects at the coyote, maintaining eye contact and moving towards active or populated areas are proven techniques of either making the coyote flee, or ending the encounter.

What should I do if the coyote keeps approaching me?

Even if the above methods don't appear to be working, continue to exaggerate them. Do not turn away or run. Keep constant eye contact with the coyote and continue to move towards other people, a building or an area of activity.

I've seen coyotes moving through my yard a lot recently. Why?

Regular coyote presence in your backyard is a result of a nearby food source. The coyote may be finding a meal in your yard, your neighbor's, or at a house down or across the street from you. Like it or not, someone in your neighborhood is feeding coyotes. Talking with your neighbors about recognizing and removing the following coyote attractants will reduce the potential of having coyotes in your backyard:

- Pet food stored or fed outside
- Accessible garbage bins and composts
- Fruit fallen from trees

Coyotes are very adaptable and though the majority of their diet consists of small rodents they enjoy apples, berries and other fruit, birds, eggs, fish and small crustaceans. The above food sources attract rats and mice as well, which is the mainstay of urban coyote meals. Even a poorly maintained bird feeder will attract wild mammals.

How can I discourage them from my backyard?

It is crucial to understand the importance of a unified neighborhood effort. If there is a regular coyote food source in one yard on your block, there will be coyotes active throughout the neighborhood. Therefore, the elimination of any potential food source is essential. High fences flush to the ground discourage them from entering yards. It is of equal importance to recognize that an indifferent attitude towards a coyote in your yard has a similar effect as feeding. Consider the following from a coyote's perspective:

- Out of 20 visual encounters with people around houses, 1 resulted in a fed steak supper watched by the resident, 1 resulted in a compost and mouse meal watched by the resident, 16 encounters were met with indifference and 2 encounters were negative experiences in which the residents chased the coyote off the property and down the lane.
- Out of 20 visual encounters with people around houses, 1 resulted in a fed roast chicken dinner and 19 experiences resulted in the coyote been scared off the property and block. Despite the free meal it is not likely to return to the hostile area.

If a coyote is in your yard it is imperative that you make the animal aware it is not welcome there. Coyotes are most likely to be frightened by aggressive gestures, loud noises and large forms. Coyotes have been scared off properties by people waving hockey sticks or brooms at them, people throwing stones, balls or tins at them, people clanging pots and pans in their direction, or by having the following home made coyote deterrents thrown or moved in their direction:

- The Coyote Shaker: A tin can containing forty pennies, wrapped in aluminum foil and sealed with duct tape.
- The Can Clanger: A group of different sized tins and cans connected to each other by string.

The combination of the light reflecting on the foil and tin, the noise made by the clanging of the tins and the aggressive gesture of shaking / throwing the tins provide several deterrents which effect the coyote's visual, (reflective light) aural (sound of metal) and motion (fear of being struck) senses simultaneously, thereby scaring the animal to move on. Don't stop at your property line. A coyote in your neighbor's yard is the same thing as having one in your own.

How can I keep my cat safe?

The only way of ensuring that your cat is safe from coyotes is to keep it indoors permanently. The more time your cat is outdoors the greater the risk it faces, not only from coyotes, but from raccoons, cars, domestic dogs, feline AIDS, leukemia, parasites and other illnesses and diseases as well.

How can I keep my dog safe?

The most common conflict between coyotes and dogs is with cat-size or smaller dogs. To ensure your pet is safe the best action is to supervise it at all times it is outside and make sure your pet is off leash only in enclosed areas. There have been reports of coyotes taking small dogs from not only the direct vicinity of their owner, but directly off the leash. If you notice a coyote when walking your dog, either gather your dog in your arms if possible, or keep it as close to you as possible while using some of the deterrents noted above and move towards an active area. If your dog (of any size) is off leash, ensure your dog has immediate recall response, not only to eliminate potential contact or conflict with coyotes, but other dogs and people as well.

How can I keep my small pet safe?

As mentioned above there have been occasions when coyotes have taken small dogs (less than cat size) directly from the leash. If there are regular coyote sightings in your neighborhood, in addition to the advice and deterrents mentioned above, the following precautionary measures can be adopted to reduce the risk of injury to your pet:

- If you are uncomfortable making aggressive gestures or throwing objects at a coyote keep a shrill whistle handy when walking your dog. The whistle may not scare the coyote directly (coyotes hear the same daily sirens, car alarms, horns etc. as we do), but it will alert other pedestrians in the area of your need for help.
- Walk your dog (on leash) in high pedestrian traffic areas such as relatively busy streets, jogging trails and park paths where help is nearby.
- Coincide the walks with times and locations of activity such as around schools at arrival, dismissal, break or lunch periods, along transit routes or transit connection routes as the work day begins or ends or around parks when activities / sporting events (nightly softball or soccer games) are held.
- Dog walk with friends and family.
- Avoid long stretches of bushy areas or paths and roads along abandoned properties.
- Make sure your dog is ahead of you while walking. If it stops to sniff or scratch behind you while on an extendable leash, keep an eye on it.

How can I prepare my child for potential coyote encounters?

Responsible parenting means keeping your children informed about all the dangers of living in an urban society. Coyotes do pose a risk to children, and kids should be made aware of what behavior (see above) has proven effective if they come into contact with a coyote.

Why should I not feed coyotes?

A Fed Coyote is a Dead Coyote

Coyotes that are intentionally fed by people invariably lose their fear of humans and develop aggressive behavior, having to be destroyed. In addition, human food does not meet the animal's seasonal nutritional needs. There is plenty of natural food around for wildlife in the city.

<http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/programs/conservation/urbanWildlife/coyotes/faq>