

Urban Coyotes

I wish there was a simple answer to this problem. In the following, I have borrowed liberally from the wildlife page of the City of San Antonio Animal Care Services:

<http://www.sanantonio.gov/animalcare/wildlife.asp>).

Coyotes are adapted to living in cities, suburbs, rural towns and agricultural areas. When developments are built in their habitat, coyotes are not permanently displaced. Some move on to other areas, but some simply adjust to their new environment.

What about rabies?

Coyotes can be rabid. However, the Bexar County records show an extremely low occurrence of rabid coyotes in the state.

What about children's safety?

Small children are at risk from coyotes; however, in Texas, there have been no reported incidents of coyote attacks. Children over the age of 5 or 6 generally play in groups and are too large to attract a coyote's interest. Children under 5 years old should be well supervised at all times, especially when near a pool, around streets, with domestic dogs, or where wildlife may be a concern.

When are coyotes a risk to people?

On rare occasions, bold coyotes have bitten humans. Although naturally curious, coyotes are usually timid animals and normally run away if challenged. Coyotes are a risk to people once they become comfortable around humans, usually as a result of feeding and/or indifference. You must aggressively discourage coyotes from feeling comfortable around you and your family by eliminating coyote attractants (food sources) from your yard and encouraging your neighbors to do the same.

What should I do if a coyote approaches me?

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

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. High fences (7+ ft) flush to the ground discourage coyotes from entering yards. It is of equal importance to recognize that an indifferent attitude toward a coyote in your yard has the same effect as feeding it.

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

- Coyote Shaker. A soft drink can containing washers, pebbles or pennies, wrapped in aluminum foil then sealed with duct tape.
- The Can Clanger. Various-sized cans connected to each other with string.
- The combination of the light reflecting on the foil and cans, noise and the aggressive gesture of shaking/throwing the cans.

Don't stop at your property line. Having a coyote in your neighbor's yard is the same as having one in your own.

Can a coyote get into fenced yards?

Coyotes can easily get over a 6-foot fence (some individuals even higher). Eliminating the coyote's ability to get a grip on the top of the fence or wall is the best means of prevention. See www.coyoteroller.com for an example of this method.

How can I keep my dog safe?

Dogs most likely to come into conflict with (or be endangered by) coyotes are typically cat size or smaller. To ensure your pet is safe, the best action is to supervise it at all times when it is outside and make sure it is off leash only in enclosed areas. There have been reports of coyotes taking small dogs not only in the vicinity of their owner, but also (rarely) directly off the leash.

How can I keep my cat safe?

The only way to ensure that your cat is safe from coyotes and other perils is to keep it indoors permanently. The more time, your cat spends outdoors the greater the risk it faces, not only from

coyotes and other wildlife (owls, hawks, etc.), but also from cars, domestic dogs, and parasites, as well as feline AIDS, leukemia, and other diseases.

What will ACS do, if there are multiple coyote attacks on animals or humans in an area?

“ACS will investigate and set humane traps, in order to capture any coyotes that remain in the area. ACS will also be available to speak to the neighborhood association or individual residents to educate citizens and answer any citizen concerns. To report a coyote sighting or to request a trap please call 311.”

Translation: Try the deterrent measures above; if these don't work, call 311 and request that ACS trap and remove the animals; ask you neighbors to do the same; and finally if ACS doesn't respond, complain to our District 8 office.

Ted Trakas

Other References:

Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation, Kendalia, TX
<http://www.wildlife-rescue.org/library/urban.php>