Co-Existing with Coyotes - Stanley Park Ecology Society¹

When are coyotes a risk to people?

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.

Remove coyote attractants in your area

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 and by removing coyote attractants, such as

- Accessible garbage or compost, including fruit that has fallen from trees or shrubs
- Outdoor pet food and water (stored or fed)
- Rodent habitat: neglected yards, garages or sheds
- Make sure your neighbors and others in your neighborhood do the same

Be prepared!

If you are concerned about encountering an aggressive coyote, you may want to keep a deterrent handy. Deterrents can include rocks, pots and pans, tennis balls, tin cans filled with nails or coins to make loud noise and a super-soaker filled with vinegar.

If a coyote approaches you:

- Appear to be as **Big**, **Mean** and **Loud** as possible
- Make yourself appear larger (stand up if sitting)
- Wave your arms, throw objects (not food) at the coyote and use your deterrent
- Shout in a deep, loud and aggressive voice
- If the coyote continues to approach, DO NOT RUN or turn your back on the coyote. Continue
 to exaggerate the above gestures while maintaining eye contact and moving toward an area of
 human activity

¹ Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES), a community based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to encouraging stewardship of our natural world through environmental education and action. www.stanleyparkecology.ca

Keeping your pets safe

Recognizing the risk is the first step toward preventing conflict between coyotes and your pet. Coyotes will prey on outdoor cats and small dogs. Pets have been reportedly taken from backyards, open spaces and even right off the leash. There are, however, some things you can do to reduce the risk to your pets:

If you own a cat: 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. Outdoor cats face potential death from cars, diseases, parasites, raccoons and dogs, in addition to coyotes.

If you own a small dog: If you are aware of coyotes in your neighborhood, you can greatly reduce the risk of conflict if you:

- Keep your dog on a short leash while outside and avoid extension leashes
- Supervise your dog when it is off-leash in the yard
- Walk your dog at times and places that coincide with high pedestrian traffic
- Keep your dog in front of you; if your dog stops, keep an eye on it
- Dog walk with other people

If you own a large dog: Coyotes pose less risk to medium-to large-sized dogs. Keep large dogs on leash, except in designated areas, and discourage your dog from feeling comfortable with coyotes by preventing it from "playing" or interacting with a coyote.

Fence your yard: Another option to protect pets and children is to fence in your rear yard. Minimum height to keep out coyotes is six feet. A five-foot fence with a rolling top bar is considered adequate.

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 millions of mice and rats and are just one part of our fortunately diverse ecosystem.

Eradication programs in North American cities have proven to be expensive failures. While eradication may remove (kill) individual animals, the coyote habitat remains and will be filled by other coyotes. 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.

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