



TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION



Urban Coyote Fact Sheet

In recent years there has been an increase in reported coyote sightings near green belt areas in Travis County. This fact sheet has been prepared to help keep citizens informed regarding efforts to deal with the situation.

The Situation

The ubiquitous coyote is found throughout North America, and hardly any animal in America is more adaptable to changing conditions. Coyotes can live just about anywhere, and as humans expand their living areas and coyotes expand their range as well, contact is inevitable. Most of the time, coyotes go out of their way to avoid humans, but they are discovering that the urban environment provides a variety of sources of food. Resourceful and adaptable as coyotes are, they will take advantage of this when they can. Coyotes have adjusted to the human population expansion of Travis County, and have already dispersed into the developed urban landscape unoccupied by other coyotes where they tend to thrive in these environments.

One of the keys to the coyote's success is its varied behavior and diet. It is an opportunistic feeder and will eat almost anything. Urban coyotes have access to rodents, rabbits, fruit, insects, carrion, household garbage, compost piles, pets, pet food, and water from ponds and landscape irrigation run-off. In addition, some people intentionally feed coyotes. Lush home landscapes and greenbelts within urban areas attract food for coyotes and give coyotes space to move around. Coyotes will also prey on domestic livestock, poultry, deer and other urban wildlife. This ready supply of food, water and shelter helps coyotes to survive and thrive in the urban landscape, and coyotes tend to lose their fear of humans.

The most serious problem with the urbanization of coyotes is that the animals have adapted to being around people. As they lose their fear of people, they become bolder in approaching people and may put themselves in hazardous situations they would normally avoid.

Coyotes are active mainly during the nighttime, but they can be moving at any time during the day. Most sightings of coyotes occur during the hours close to sunrise and sunset.

The abundance of food regulates coyote numbers, reproduction, survival, dispersal and territories. In the wild, coyotes generally have home ranges of 3 to 16 square miles. But in suburban areas, where resources are plentiful, coyotes may need only 1/4 to 1/2 square mile. This can lead to large coyote populations.

It is doubtful that the coyote problem will go away; however, it can be managed and mitigated.

Ten things residents can do to help the situation

1. Do not feed coyotes or other wildlife!
2. Eliminate sources of water.
3. Bird feeders should be positioned so that coyotes can't get the feed. Coyotes are attracted by bread, table scraps, and even seed. They may also be attracted by birds and rodents that come to the feeders and are attracted to deer feed.
4. Do not discard edible garbage where coyotes can get to it.
5. Secure garbage containers and eliminate garbage odors.
6. Feed pets indoors whenever possible. Pick up any leftovers if feeding outdoors. Store pet food where it is inaccessible to wildlife.
7. Trim and clean, near ground level, any shrubbery that provides hiding cover for coyotes or prey.
8. As in all cases, small children should never be left unattended.
9. Don't allow pets to run free. Keep them safely confined and provide secure nighttime housing for them. Walk your dog on a leash and accompany your pet outside, especially at night.
10. Discourage coyotes from frequenting your area. If you start seeing coyotes around your home or property, chase them away by shouting, making loud noises or throwing rocks.

What are local governments doing about the situation?

Travis County and Texas Wildlife Services, a Department of the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service, have entered into a contract to address the coyote problem in Travis County. Under the agreement, Texas Wildlife Services will provide technical assistance and direct control. Technical assistance involves assisting citizens by providing advice, recommendations, information, educational material, and educational programs. Direct control will involve removal of coyotes that exhibit aggressive behavior towards people or pets, and pose a risk to human health and safety. The City of Austin will participate in the partnership between Travis County and Texas Wildlife Services.

What should I do if I see a coyote?

To report coyote sightings, aggressive behavior towards people, or pets call 3-1-1. You will be asked to describe in detail the nature of your complaint, time, location, etc. The information gathered through 311 will be relayed to Texas Wildlife Services for response/follow-up.

Call 9-1-1 to report a coyote attack on a human.

For more information call 3-1-1 or visit one of the following websites:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/wildlife_damage/content/printable_version/coyote_Dec2011.pdf

<http://agrifecdn.tamu.edu/txwildlifeservices/files/2011/07/SuburbanCoyotes.pdf>

To request an educational program for your community call (512) 854-2994.