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PREVENTING COYOTE CONFLICTS:

How to Keep Coyotes Out of Your Yard and Keep Your Pets Safe

The promise of food can lure coyotes into suburban yards and create a “yards are good places to look for food” mindset. Without the lure of food or other attractants, their visits will be infrequent and brief. But a coyote who finds food in one yard may well search for food in others.

What attracts coyotes to urban and residential areas?

Food

Deliberately feeding coyotes is wrong. You may enjoy the sight of wild animals who regularly visit your yard for handouts, but this is a sure way to habituate them to humans in a way that is likely to lead to conflicts. Here are some other general rules about feeding:

- Avoid feeding pets outside. If you do, feed only during the day and remove the food bowl after your pet finished her meal.
- In dry conditions, water can be as much an attractant as food, so remove bowls set outside for pets and make watering cans unavailable.
- If you compost, be sure to use enclosed bins and do not compost meat or fish scraps.
- Good housekeeping, such as regularly raking areas around bird feeders can also help discourage coyote activity near residences.
- Keep trash in high-quality containers with tight-fitting lids. For good measure, don't place the cans at the curb until the morning of collection.
- Bag especially attractive food wastes, such as meat scraps or leftover pet food. If it is several days before garbage will be picked up, freeze them temporarily or haul directly to a dumpster or other secure storage container.

Shelter

Coyotes are secretive animals, and studies have shown they can live for a long time in close proximity to dense human settlements without ever being noticed. Such coyotes are abiding by the rules we set for minimal conflicts, and should be left alone.

In the spring, when coyotes give birth and begin to raise young, they concentrate their activities around dens or burrows in which the young are sheltered. At these times, they may become highly defensive and territorial, and challenge any other coyote or dog that comes close to the pups. People walking their dogs in parks and wooded areas may run in to these coyotes and even be challenged by them to back off. Rarely, fights occur, probably most often when the dog is off lead. It's important to recognize such incidents for what they are: defense of space, not random attacks. If you encounter a coyote when walking your pet, do NOT run away; haze the coyote with the techniques described in the **Hazing Guidelines**.

Free-roaming pets

Individual coyotes can be serious predators of cats and small dogs. Although coyotes are primarily nocturnal, the best way to minimize risk to pets is not to leave them out unattended at any time. Don't

allow your cat to roam freely. Ideally, cats should be kept indoors regardless of whether there is a coyote in the area or not—to keep cats safe and healthy as well as to keep them from killing wildlife.

If you decide not to keep your cats inside and there is little natural tree cover around, you can give them an escape route from pursuing coyotes by installing “cat posts.” These can be long, climbable wooden posts (four inches by four inches or corner posts) that stand out of the ground at least six to eight feet.

Protect poultry or hobby animals from coyotes (and other predators) with fencing (both structural and electric) and by ensuring that they are confined in sturdy cages or pens each evening.

Coyotes can leap walls and fences of five to six feet fairly easily, but you can install a coyote “roller” (see www.coyoteroller.com or make your own with a pvc pipe) on the top to deter them. Fences should extend underground at least 6 inches or include a mesh apron, since coyotes are good diggers.

Feral Cat Colonies

People who feed feral cats are often concerned coyotes might prey on the cats. These concerns are justified, as coyotes will be attracted not only to the source of food provided for the cats but to the cats as prey themselves. Here are some general suggestions for keeping the cats safer:

- Feed cats only by day and pick up any leftovers immediately. Let them eat for 20 minutes or so and then that’s it for the day.
- Provide escape routes for cats. In treeless areas, erect cat posts; where there are trees, it means place feeding stations near them.
- Elevate the feeding station beyond coyotes’—but not the cats’—reach. Coyotes might figure out how to jump onto the station, so some tinkering with the design may be necessary.
- Discourage/harass any coyotes seen on the property. Go after them aggressively, using the techniques described in the **Hazing Guidelines**. Make them feel uncomfortable.