

City of Albuquerque

Coyote Management Plan

Prepared by City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department



ONE
ALBUQUE
RQUE

environmental
health



Contents

- About Coyotes.....3
 - Coyotes in the Urban Setting.....3
 - Conflicts with Coyotes.....4
- Coyote Management Strategies.....5
 - Outreach and Education.....5
 - Attractant Reduction.....6
 - Food/water.....6
 - Shelter.....7
 - Pet Safety.....7
 - Hazing and Deterrence.....8
 - Removal.....9
- Appendix A. Table of Coyote Behaviors.....10
- Appendix B. Yard Audit Checklist.....14



About Coyotes



The Coyote (*Canis latrans*) is a member of the Canidae family, the same as foxes and domestic dogs. Somewhat similar to a collie dog in appearance and size, coyotes are a medium sized dog (25-35 lbs.) with a pointed snout, large ears, and a long, bushy tail-- although their thicker coats and long, skinny legs may make them appear deceptively larger than their actual size. Coyotes are opportunistic omnivores and will eat fruit, birds, rodents, and other small mammals. They are very vocal animals that use a variety of sounds to communicate with each other. Coyotes are native to the southwestern US and have been present in New Mexico for millions of years.

Coyotes in the Urban Setting

Coyotes are highly intelligent and adaptable animals that have become accustomed to living in urban areas. As colonization spread across North America, so too did the range of the coyote. They are now found throughout all of the United States except Hawaii, and development of urban coyote populations started in the latter half of the 20th century.

Coyotes tend to prefer areas with more vegetation, landform and ability to hide. It is not rare for an individual or pack to settle in an urban park, open space, or other preferred habitat. Coyotes are well distributed throughout the City of Albuquerque, in even the most densely urban neighborhoods. Coyotes are most often spotted in the bosque, ditches and acequias, Open Space lands, parks, golf courses, empty lots, arroyos and more.

Urbanized coyotes are different from rural coyote populations in multiple ways, but most notably their acclimation to the presence of their larger predators, humans. They are accustomed to the hustle and bustle of city life—vehicles, manmade structures, and of course, humans themselves. They are adept at finding food from whatever sources available, most notably human-based sources such as trash, fallen fruit, fruit/vegetables from landscaping or cultivated plants, birds, mice and other rodents, chickens, ducks, rabbits and other small mammals.

About Coyotes Continued



Even in densely populated cities, coyotes change their behaviors to be virtually undetectable by the majority of the human population. Urbanized coyotes are known to change their activity times to times that allow them to avoid the peak activity of humans during the daylight hours, although it is not uncommon to see them navigating around cities during the day. Coyotes are naturally skittish and scared of humans, but some individuals may become more bold and spend more time around humans. Any sort of feeding of coyotes by humans—intentional or unintentional—creates a positive feedback cycle that encourages this bolder behavior and can cause conflicts and potential threats to human and pet populations.

Conflicts with Coyotes

There have been no documented human attacks by coyotes in the City of Albuquerque. Coyote attacks on humans are an exceedingly rare event in the United States, with a handful of attacks per year in contrast to an estimated over 4.5 million people per year who are bitten by domestic dogs.

Conflicts between humans and coyotes are usually influenced by the intentional or unintentional actions of humans. The most common cause of human and coyote conflict is the provision of food by humans, especially in cases of deliberate feeding. Human feeding of coyotes changes their behavior in a variety of ways and reducing intentional and unintentional feedings as well as potential coyote attractants on properties can reduce frequency and risk of human and coyote conflicts.

Although documented human attacks by coyotes are very rare, there are much higher rates of conflicts between pets and coyotes. Smaller breeds of dogs or cats are more likely to be victims of coyote attacks, but dogs of all sizes may have potential conflicts with coyotes, especially around den sites. Use of simple pet safety techniques as outlined later in this document by citizens greatly reduces the chances of these conflicts occurring.

Coyote Management Strategies



The City of Albuquerque's goal is cooperative coexistence between both humans and wild citizens. Human/Wildlife conflicts can often be reduced and prevented by simple changes in human behavior, property and neighborhoods.

Efforts focused on reducing and preventing human/wildlife conflict and more specifically, human/coyote conflicts are:

1. Outreach and education,
2. Attractant reduction,
3. Hazing and deterrence, and
4. Removal.

A list of urban coyote behaviors and both institutional and citizen responses are listed in Appendix A of this document.

Outreach and Education

Many human/coyote conflict issues can be reduced or resolved by humans taking simple steps to change their behavior and surroundings. The City of Albuquerque Environmental Health Department's Urban Biology Division (UBD) provides information in a variety of forms to engage the community to help them understand the behavior of urban coyotes and other wildlife through a variety of channels and methods.

Content that UBD provides to the public through education and consulting regarding urban coyotes includes but is not limited to: life history and ecology, common urbanized coyote behavior, pet safety, information about reducing attractants, and hazing information.

Information is distributed to the public through websites, social media, traditional media venues, one-on-one consultation, follow up with 311 and direct inquiries, outreach events, public lectures and more.

Coyote Management Strategies Continued



Attractant Reduction

While coyotes are naturally curious creatures, citizens can take simple, low and no-cost steps to reduce urban wildlife interest in their property—including coyotes. UBD offers a free property inspection/yard audit where we walk citizens through the issues that are particular to their property and explain how to remedy them to reduce the habitability or attractiveness of their property to coyote. A checklist is also available at the end of this document (Appendix B) for citizens to make changes on their own without a consultation.

These potential attractants and modifications fall under 3 major categories: Food/Water, Shelter, and Pet Safety.

Food/water

As coyotes are opportunistic omnivores, they will eat both plants and animals. Creative and highly adaptable, they will consume a meal from human or natural sources and switch between them on any given day. Some ways to reduce the presence of urban coyotes on your property include:

- NEVER hand-feed or intentionally feed a coyote by any other method.
- Never feed pets outdoors; store all pet food securely indoors.
- Remove bird feeders or frequently clean fallen seed from the ground. Coyotes will eat both the seed and the animals that eat the seed.
- Clean up fallen fruit around trees.
- Compost your food scraps in closed systems/tumblers where wildlife cannot access.
- Clean up food/grease around and inside barbeque grills after each use.
- Secure all trash containers with locking lids and place curbside the morning of trash pickup. Periodically clean the inside of the trash container to reduce odor.
- Remove water sources, including, but not limited to: pet water bowls, kiddie pools, ponds, fountains and leaking irrigation lines.

Coyote Management Strategies Continued



Shelter

Both animals and humans need shelter, but they seek it in different ways. Citizens can take steps to reduce the attractiveness of their property as a source of shelter for coyotes in the following ways:

- Trim shrubs and other vegetation, especially near structures.
- Restrict access under decks and sheds, around debris or woodpiles, or any other structure that can provide cover.
- Enclose property with an 8-foot fence or a 6-foot fence with an additional extension, coyote rollers, or electrification to deter coyotes. Ensure that there are no gaps and that the bottom of the fence extends underground 6 inches or is fitted with a mesh apron to deter coyotes from digging underneath.

Pet Safety

Pets, especially small animals (small dogs and cats) and small agricultural pets (chickens, ducks, rabbits, etc.) can be attractive to coyote as a potential food source. Coyote are unable to differentiate between a wild and domestic small animal.

Ways to keep pets of all kinds safe include:

- Never leave pets unattended outside, especially at night.
- Do not let cats and other small pets out to roam.
- Never allow pets to interact with or harass coyotes.
- Fully enclose outdoor pet kennels.
- Keep chickens, ducks, rabbits, etc. secured in an appropriate, well armored coop or hutch.
- Keep pets on a leash no longer than 6 feet in length when outside your property.
- Do not let your pets run off leash in open space areas.

Hazing and Deterrence

Hazing is a widely employed method to deter coyote from a particular location and from being comfortable around humans. Hazing simply means scaring a coyote away from you, your yard, or your neighborhood. Coyotes are members of the dog family, and just as we train our dogs to adopt good behavior, we can reinforce a coyote's natural instinct to avoid people without harming them. Keeping coyotes wild and wary is the key to successful coexistence.

When to haze coyote:

- Haze if a coyote approaches you in a park or neighborhood
- Haze if you see a coyote that is comfortable walking your street or visiting yards

When NOT to haze coyote:

- Do not haze if you suspect a coyote is sick or injured.
- Do not haze if it is early spring – early summer, and you are in an area when coyotes may have a den.

How to haze coyote:

- Stand your ground.
- Make eye contact with the coyote.
- Advance toward the coyote if there is hesitation on the part of the coyote, creating pressure.
- Use hazing tools such as noisemakers (pots and pans, cans with rocks or pennies, etc.) or surprises (garden hoses, water guns with vinegar water, pop-open umbrellas, motion activated lights or sprinklers) to frighten the animal.
- Make sure the coyote is focused on you, the human, as the source of danger or discomfort. Do not haze from a building or car where the coyote cannot associate humans as the source of fear.
- If you see more than one coyote, continue your hazing efforts. Multiple animals will most likely respond to the same hazing techniques at the same time.
- Make it multisensory. Use tools that scare with sound, light, and motion. The more of these, the better.
- Continue the hazing actions until the coyote(s) retreat and allow room for the animal(s) to escape.
- Variety is essential. Coyotes can learn to recognize and avoid individual people, so the more often a coyote has a negative experience with various hazing tools and different people, the faster it will change its behavior to avoid human contact.
- Hazing should be exaggerated, assertive, and consistent. Neighborhoods should always maintain some level of hazing using a variety of tools so that coyotes do not return to unacceptable behavior over time.

Removal



Removal is a last resort, lethal measure and only taken in specific and rare circumstances.

Relocation of coyotes is not a viable option for multiple reasons:

- Relocation of an animal to an area outside of its normal movement range can spread both zoonotic (diseases transmitted from animals to humans) and species-specific diseases and introduce them into populations not previously affected by those diseases.
- Decades of monitoring by both wildlife agencies and researchers has found that relocation is not a viable option for coyotes, as it almost always leads to the death of the animal through a variety of causes.
- Studies have also shown that the removal of a coyote from an area—either by relocation or lethal means—creates a paradoxical effect that achieves the opposite of the intended impact of the removal. These removals of coyotes from the local coyote populations cause disruption of the existing social structure and prompts higher reproductive rates and creation of more competing packs in the same area.

Multiple factors are considered and investigated before institution of removal. Removal will be used against a specific animal and not as a blanket action against multiple animals. The target coyote must be a clear and demonstrated danger to human health and safety or incapacitated in the case of injury.

Removal is automatically instituted in cases of human attack. In extreme cases, and at the judgement of designated City of Albuquerque staff, removal may be necessary at the site of the incident. This action may extend to cases where a coyote expresses an immediate threat and where particularly aggressive behavior is demonstrated when designated officials arrive on scene.

Appendix A. Table of Coyote Behaviors

Coyote Behavior	Type	Institutional Response	Citizen Response
Coyote heard; scats or tracks seen	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable.	No response necessary
Coyote seen moving through area during day or night	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing	No response necessary, hazing animal optional
Coyote seen resting in an area during day or night	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing	No response necessary, hazing animal optional
Coyote encounters a person and clearly exhibits fear by running	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety	Haze animal

Appendix A. Table of Coyote Behaviors

Coyote Behavior	Type	Institutional Response	Citizen Response
Coyote following or approaching human, or human with pet, with no incident	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety	Haze animal, take steps to protect pets
Coyote entering a yard, no incident	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety; offer wildlife inspection/yard audit information	Haze animal, take steps to protect pets, reduce attractants
Coyote entering a yard with people and pets present, no incident	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety; offer wildlife inspection/yard audit information	Haze animal, take steps to protect pets, reduce attractants
Coyote attacks unattended pet in yard	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety; offer wildlife inspection/yard audit information	Haze animal, take steps to protect pets, reduce attractants

Appendix A. Table of Coyote Behaviors

Coyote Behavior	Type	Institutional Response	Citizen Response
Coyote attacks pet off-leash in open space area	Normal	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety; offer wildlife inspection/yard audit information	Take steps to protect pets
Coyote attacks attended pet within 6' of person	Potentially Dangerous	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Site visit conducted. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety. Removal will be considered.	Take steps to protect pets
Coyote exhibits threatening behavior toward a human	Potentially Dangerous	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Site visit conducted. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety. Removal will be considered.	Cease behaviors that attracted/caused contact with animal. Haze animal, take steps to protect pets.

Appendix A. Table of Coyote Behaviors

Coyote Behavior	Type	Institutional Response	Citizen Response
Human encouraged coyote by hand feeding, approaching coyote with pups, intervening during attack etc.	Dangerous (Human Provoked)	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Site visit conducted. Provide situationally specific educational materials/information as applicable: ecology/behavior, hazing, pet safety. Removal will be considered.	Cease behaviors that attracted/caused contact with animal. Anyone with physical contact with the animal must seek out advice of physician concerning zoonotic disease exposure.
Coyote has bitten human without encouragement	Dangerous (Unprovoked)	Report added to electronic records. Attempt contact with reporting party for further information. Site visit conducted. Removal will be instituted.	Anyone with physical contact with the animal must seek out advice of physician concerning zoonotic disease exposure.

Appendix A. Table contains coyote behaviors, institutional responses, and citizen responses.

Appendix B. Yard Audit Checklist

Food	OK	Needs Work	How to improve
Human Food			NEVER hand-feed or intentionally feed a coyote!
Pet Food			Never feed pets outdoors; store all pet food securely indoors.
Bird Feeders			Remove bird feeders or frequently clean fallen seed from the ground. Coyote will eat both the seed and the animals that eat the seed.
Fallen Fruit			Clean up fallen fruit around trees.
Compost			Compost your food scraps in closed systems/tumblers where wildlife cannot access.
BBQ Grills			Clean up food/grease around and inside barbeque grills after each use.
Trash			Secure all trash containers with locking lids and place curbside the morning of trash pickup. Periodically clean the inside of the trash container to reduce odor.

Water	OK	Needs Work	How to improve
Water Sources			Remove water sources, including, but not limited to: pet water bowls, kiddie pools, ponds, fountains and leaking irrigation lines.

Shelter	OK	Needs Work	How to improve
Landscaping			Trim shrubs and other vegetation, especially near structures.
Structures			Restrict access under decks and sheds, around woodpiles, or any other structure that can provide cover.
Fencing			Enclose property with an 8-foot fence or a 6-foot fence with an additional extension, coyote rollers, or electrification to deter coyotes. Ensure that there are no gaps and that the bottom of the fence extends underground 6 inches or is fitted with a mesh apron to deter coyotes from digging underneath.

Appendix B. Yard Audit Checklist

Pet Safety	OK	Needs Work	How to improve
Accompany			Never leave pets unattended outside, especially at night.
Access			Do not let cats and other small pets out to roam.
Interaction			Never allow pets to interact with or harass coyotes.
Protect			Fully enclose outdoor pet kennels.
Agricultural Pets			Keep chickens, ducks, rabbits, etc. secured in an appropriate, well armored coop or hutch.
Restrain			Keep pets on a leash no longer than 6 feet in length when outside your property.
Open Spaces			Do not let your pets run off leash in open space areas

Appendix B. The Yard Audit Checklist contains information regarding common coyote attractants that can be used by both designated staff and citizens to reduce attractants on a given property.