



Managing Encounters Between Humans and Coyotes



Guidelines and Information

March 2010

PURPOSE

The Highlands Ranch Metro District manages a parks and open space system with more than 2,500 acres of land. These areas provide habitat and food source which attract coyotes to our community. With 5,000 residential properties adjacent to the open space and nearly 1.5 million visitor days, it is not uncommon for individuals to spot a coyote behind their back fence or along the trail they may be walking.

Coyotes are our neighbors in Highlands Ranch. The Metro District supports coexistence of people and coyotes. This document provides strategies to reduce encounters between humans and coyotes in our community. The role of home owners, pet owners and the Metro District are outlined in the chart below. Situations where other management techniques may be required, including immediate lethal control, are also addressed.

RESPONSIBILITY

Highlands Ranch Metro District – The Metro District is responsible for education, monitoring and reporting. As the parks and open space land owner, local government and responsible steward of public safety and resources, it's the Metro District's role to provide information to citizens about potential encounters between humans and coyotes. In addition, the Metro District monitors encounters, documents them and reports them to the appropriate agencies. Information gathered by the Metro District is provided to the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Animal Control and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) - The CDOW provides guidance and education to landowners, Metro District staff and Douglas County officials on managing nuisance coyotes. CDOW personnel respond to reports of dangerous coyotes and decide how to handle each situation based on the interest of public safety.

Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) - DCSO will notify the CDOW of a reported coyote conflict. Although they may be a first responder to a coyote incident, DCSO will turn over the incident to the CDOW for investigation and action once they arrive.

DEFINITIONS OF COYOTE INTERACTIONS

Coyotes are highly adaptive members of the dog family and have demonstrated an ability to survive in urbanized environments. Unless habituated to humans, coyotes are generally shy and wary, and do not normally present a threat to humans. The following are definitions of human/coyote interactions offered by the CDOW.

Observation - Noticing tracks, scat or vocalizations of coyotes in an area.

Sighting - A visual observation of a coyote.

Encounter - An unexpected direct meeting between a human and a coyote without incident. A coyote may be in close proximity to a human but does not create an unsafe situation.

Incident - A conflict between a human and a coyote where a coyote exhibits behavior creating an unsafe situation. A coyote may show aggression towards a human without any physical contact. Most attacks on pets fall within this definition.

Attack – A direct, aggressive physical contact with a human by a coyote.

DEFINING AND ASSESSING COYOTE BEHAVIOR

The following are common concerns regarding coyote behavior that are often expressed by citizens, and effective strategies that homeowners can implement to reduce conflicts with coyotes. One common strategy referred to in the chart is hazing. Hazing is an activity or series of activities designed to change a coyote’s behavior.

Conflict	Discussion	Home Owner/Pet Owner Action
Predation on free roaming domestic cats	When domestic cats roam freely in open space areas they become part of the natural food chain. They may be preying on mice and songbirds and in turn may be preyed upon by coyotes. This is a part of the natural food chain.	Keep cats inside or in enclosed cat runs.
Predation on unattended or unleashed dogs	<p>It is normal behavior for coyotes to prey on domestic dogs roaming free in the open space or in your backyard.</p> <p>Dogs left to run free in open space areas may be seen as competition or a threat to coyotes and may prompt them to become territorial.</p>	<p>Keep dogs leashed on a six-foot long or shorter leash at all times in parks and open space areas.</p> <p>Attend to pets while they are outside or pen them in an enclosed dog run.</p> <p>Use pet doors that can be opened and closed to ensure pets are supervised when outdoors and to keep coyotes from entering your home through the pet door.</p>
Predation on leashed dogs	<p>It is not normal behavior for a coyote to attack a dog on a short (six-foot long) leash.</p> <p>Dogs on a long leash (15-20 feet) may cause too much separation between owner and pet. Coyotes may not perceive the pet-owner relationship in this circumstance.</p>	<p>Keep dogs leashed on a six-foot long or shorter leash at all times in parks and open space areas.</p> <p>Leashes that extend 15 feet or more should not be used to walk pets.</p> <p>Yell, clap and throw rocks at the coyote to make it feel unwelcome and fearful of humans.</p> <p>Notify the Metro District at 303-540-2311.</p>
Coyotes observed in private yards	<p>Presence of a coyote in a private yard is cause for concern if the animal displays aggressive behavior or approaches humans.</p> <p>Coyotes should not feel comfortable around people and should be discouraged from private yards.</p>	<p>Do not intentionally feed wildlife.</p> <p>Remove coyote attractants from your yard. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible garbage cans or compost • Fruit that has fallen from trees

Conflict	Discussion	Home Owner/Pet Owner Action
Coyotes observed in private yards, cont.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rodent habitat such as tall grass, low shrubs, or rock outcropping that allow rodents to seek cover • Accessible outdoor pet food • Low brush that may shelter coyotes • Bird feeders and seed • Sources of water <p>Other things to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install motion sensing lights • Use coyote exclusions, deterrents and repellents • Spray with a garden hose • Yell, clap or throw rocks at coyotes
Coyotes observed in parks, natural areas and trails	Coyotes are likely present in many parks and natural areas even if not frequently seen.	Unless coyotes are approaching people or acting aggressively towards humans, they should be left alone.
Coyote dens	<p>Aggressive behavior by coyotes may be tied to protection of nearby dens.</p> <p>Coyotes raising young may be more prone to predation and harassment on off-leash pets.</p>	<p>If a coyote displays aggressive behavior toward a leashed dog, pet owner should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yell, clap and throw rocks at it • Remove their leashed pet from the area • Notify Metro District park rangers at 303-540-2311

In some instances the Metro District may initiate activities to change the behaviors of habituated coyotes and curtail unacceptable coyote behavior. Activities may include:

- Using pepper spray or other irritant sprays against coyotes
- Blaring sound producing devices such as an air horn
- Shooting at coyotes with slingshots, paintball guns or bean bag rounds with an intent to scare and not harm it

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Education and outreach is important for people to coexist with coyotes. Informed residents make better decisions about maintaining their property and keeping themselves and their pets safe. They understand coyote behavior which in turn decreases unreasonable fears of coyotes. Understanding normal coyote behavior is instrumental in the community playing an important role in reshaping undesired coyote behaviors.

The Metro District outreach program includes one-on-one visits with homeowners, signage, online resources, and educational programs. Metro District park rangers can conduct a coyote conflict prevention home audit with homeowners. By reviewing the home audit checklist, homeowners evaluate items in their yards that may be attracting coyotes to their property.

In areas along trails and open space areas where coyotes have been frequently observed, the Metro District can place warning and educational signs. The signs inform visitors that coyotes frequent the area and provide information about what to do if one is spotted.

Residents can also visit the Open Space Information Center (OSIC) located on the Metro District's Web site at www.highlandsranch.org. The OSIC provides important information to residents that live adjacent to open space and to residents that use the Metro District's parks and trails. The following documents about coyotes can be found in the OSIC:

- Coyote Facts & Tips
- Coyote Home Audit Checklist
- Coyote Hazing Guidelines
- Coyote Deterrents
- Coyote FAQs

In addition to the Open Space Information Center, Metro District staff takes an active role in educating the public and in enforcing park and open space rules. Coyote education and outreach programs offered by the Metro District include:

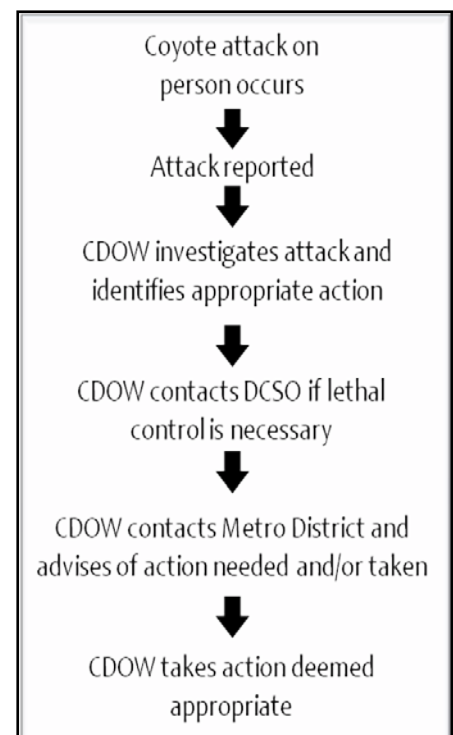
- A. Annual coexisting with coyote's public meeting, presented by the Metro District and CDOW. Topics of discussion include:
 1. Protecting pets
 2. Discouraging coyote activity in and around your yard
 3. Staying safe on the trails and natural open space areas
- B. Living with Wildlife – Park rangers present this program to various youth groups and schools throughout the year. Park rangers discuss coyote biology, normal coyote behavior and keeping coyotes and other wildlife out of your yard.
- C. Daily park ranger visitor contacts while on patrol.

RESPONSE TO A COYOTE ATTACK ON A PERSON

Coyote attacks on a human in Highlands Ranch require the immediate notification of the CDOW. Once an attack is reported, the CDOW investigates the attack and determines if the coyote needs to be destroyed. If lethal control is deemed necessary, CDOW will contact the Metro District and notify them of the action needed and/or taken.

Lethal control of coyotes on public property may only be used after a site specific investigation by CDOW determining a coyote or pack of coyotes to be dangerous and pose a risk to public safety.

If lethal control is pursued, all reasonable measures will be taken by CDOW so lethal control measures are aimed at the offending coyote(s). Lethal measures must be in compliance with state and local laws and must assure the safety of the surrounding public. The CDOW may coordinate with the United States Animal



and Plant Health Inspection Service for lethal control of coyotes on Metro District property.

If a coyote is deemed to be aggressive by CDOW, it will be destroyed with lethal control (shooting) by a skilled and authorized peace officer.

Lethal coyote control can be effective in eliminating individual animals that are dangerous and/or pose a human health risk. Lethal control is not an effective strategy to eliminate or control local coyote populations.

After the incident or attack has been addressed, the Metro District will implement animal control strategies coupled with education outreach to eliminate human and animal behaviors likely to lead to a reoccurrence of the problem. Coyotes will almost certainly return to the area; whether coyote problems return as well will depend on whether causes are addressed at the source.

Private Property

Homeowners may use lawful methods on their property to control nuisance wildlife. Contact the Colorado Division of Wildlife or Douglas County Sheriff's Office for information pertaining to controlling nuisance wildlife on private property. Citizens, parks and open space visitors and adjacent property owners are prohibited from attempting to control wildlife on public property.

AUTHORITY

- A.** Colorado Revised Statute 33-1-106 gives the Wildlife Commission the authority to regulate the circumstances under which wildlife may be taken, and to determine the disposition of usable portions of wildlife.
- B.** Colorado Revised Statute 33-1-105(1)(h) gives the Wildlife Commission the authority to provide for destruction of any wildlife that poses a threat to public health, safety, or welfare.
- C.** Colorado Revised Statute 33-6-107(9) permits any person, any member of such person's family, or any employee of the person to hunt, trap, or take coyotes on land owned or leased by the person without securing licenses to do so, but only when such wildlife is causing damage to crops, real or personal property, or livestock.
- D.** Wildlife Commission Regulation 303 (A) prohibits the relocation of coyotes without a permit. Studies have shown that relocation is not an effective solution to coyote conflicts. The CDOW generally will not authorize the relocation of coyotes.
- E.** Colorado Revised Statute 33-6-205 gives federal, state, county or municipal departments of health the ability to grant an exemption to Amendment 14 to take (by use of leg hold traps, snares, instant kill body-gripping design traps or poisons) wildlife for the purpose of protecting human health and safety.