

COYOTES IN THE CITY

According to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources the Eastern Coyote flourishes in cities throughout Ontario. Coyotes are not normally aggressive to humans, however we should always exercise caution around wildlife.

Eastern coyotes are a natural part of our urban ecosystems and are an important control for rodent and rabbit populations. Although coyotes prefer to hunt under the cover of dusk they are often seen hunting in the day time.

The name “coy wolf” may be used to describe the Eastern Coyote, however, this can be misleading as this is not a new species and they are not wolves. The Eastern coyote is the same animal that has existed in Ontario since the early 1900’s.

The Eastern Coyote may have slightly longer legs but is usually very lean under the bushy coat and although they may look like a large German Shepherd or wolf their average weight ranges between 30lbs to 45lbs, the approximate weight of a Border Collie type dog.

Coyotes are shy and tend to avoid humans, however in an urban environment they are comfortable and travel residential properties in search of food, their main diet consists of small mammals such as mice. In the City they will prey upon pets that are off leash or left in a yard unattended.

You may never see a coyote in the City but it is important to be aware they exist and they travel residential areas looking for opportunities to prey upon pets. They will hunt in the daytime but most pets are attacked in the early morning hours or at night when it is dark.

An abundance of food can draw coyotes into residential areas and this is also the time when outdoor or unattended pets may be at a greater risk of a coyote encounter or attack. Coyotes do not recognize or distinguish roadways or private property as boundaries; they simply regard these areas as a part of their territory. Hydro corridors and rail lines have been identified as preferred hunting and travel routes for coyotes as they afford them privacy from humans.

Coyotes are normally shy creatures but they are also curious and will follow/observe humans at a distance a behaviour known as shadowing. This behaviour is often mistaken as “bold or aggressive” when it is actually curiosity. Coyotes are intelligent but are natural cowards and are “hardwired” to avoid confrontations, however, like dogs they are also naturally prone to chase after fleeing prey so it is important not to run if you see a loose dog or a coyote.

Why not trap and remove them? Coyotes are extremely intelligent and very difficult to trap without the use of leg hold traps. Placement of leg hold traps in a heavily populated area is not recommended. Trapped animals cannot be re-located due to lack of habitat and studies have shown that relocated animals often die. Finally, removal is not a long term solution as the removal of one coyote only provides a vacancy for another coyote.

There are steps that residents can take to avoid potential conflicts and make their homes less appealing to wildlife. Coyotes will take advantage of a food source such as garbage, compost or even bird seed. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) Officials site the number one reason for human conflicts with coyotes is habituation through feeding.

Residents are cautioned never to feed coyotes and to watch for any instances of feeding in their neighbourhood. Residents should also ensure that their garbage and composting containers are stored properly. Coyotes have also been known to prey upon unsupervised or free roaming pets. Pet owners are reminded to supervise outdoor pets, walk dogs on a 5’ (five foot) leash and keep cats indoors, particularly after dark or during the winter months.

Animal Services responds to emergency situations involving sick or injured animals 24/7. Should residents see an animal that is sick, injured or acting strangely OR to report the feeding of coyotes or wildlife we would encourage them to contact Animal Services.

TIPS TO COEXIST WITH COYOTES

DO NOT FEED COYOTES – FEEDING COYOTES CAUSES AGGRESSION TO HUMANS

- Educate and/or report person's leaving food or attractants outdoors. The City of Mississauga's Animal Care and Control By-Law 0098-04, Part IV, Section 10, prohibits the feeding of wildlife.

PROPERTY SAFETY TIPS

- Store garbage indoors until collection day
- Secure garbage and compost in durable plastic or steel containers with locking lids
- Remove bird feeders and seed spillage that attracts rodents and their predators
- Feed pets indoors
- Clean BBQ grills and tools after each use
- Trim shrubs and remove rodent habitats such as rock or wood piles in the yard
- Remove ripe vegetables, ripened fruit and clean up windfalls
- Install motion sensor lights or sprinklers
- Install a 6' solid fence and extend with mesh underground to prevent burrowing
- Install coyote rollers on fencing
- Enclose crawl spaces beneath decks and sheds

PET SAFETY TIPS

- Keep cats indoors
- Keep dogs on a 5' leash and do not allow them to chase wildlife
- Check your yard for wildlife *before* letting your pet outside
- Do not house rabbits, fowl or other pets outdoors
- Vaccinate your pet against rabies

FAMILY SAFETY TIPS

- Never leave young children unattended
- Teach children not to approach or harass wildlife
- Avoid walking alone after dark

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A COYOTE

- Stay calm and wait until they move away
- Do not turn your back or run (like a dog, this may cause them to chase you)
- If approached, stand tall, wave your arms, make yourself as large as possible
- Clap, yell, shout loudly, throw something or make startling movements (coyotes avoid scary situations)
- Carry a flashlight, audible alarm or an umbrella you can open to startle them
- Carry a cell phone

To Report Unusual Wildlife Activity or the Feeding of Wildlife

Contact Animal Services at:

905-896-5858 – Monday to Friday 8:00am-4:00pm
Evenings, Weekends and Holidays – 905-615-3000

In the Case of Immediate Threat to Personal Safety Call - 911

This information has been provided by the City of Mississauga Animal Services.
For additional wildlife information visit our web site at www.mypetmississauga.ca

