

COPING WITH THE URBAN COYOTE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER



EVERYONE enjoys observing wildlife in its natural environment. However, many well-meaning residents of urban hillside or rural areas have promoted an unnatural boldness in coyotes by intentionally offering them food, or by carelessness in the handling of pet food and garbage.

Because of the interesting menu available in the form of handouts, dog and cat food, or easy-to-open garbage cans, the highly adaptable coyote is flourishing in intensely populated areas.

Where other natural predators have retreated, rats, mice, and other small animals have increased. In such a situation the coyote is beneficial, if residents would cease providing him with even more convenient meals.

This native member of the dog family closely resembles a medium-size German shepherd dog, with the exception of its elongated snout, and its bushy, black-tipped tail, which is carried straight out as it walks. During the night the coyote's high-pitched, yodel-like yapping can frequently be heard—especially following the sound of sirens from passing emergency vehicles.

The animal Mark Twain called “the most friendless of God's creatures” is also the most adaptable. The coyote can survive on whatever food is available, from rodents to rubbish, from insects to fruit to carrion. He can also be a threat to family pets, and, in isolated but tragic cases, has attacked small children.

Essentially unopposed by control measures, and lured by abundant food sources provided by people, he has become accustomed to the sight and sounds of humans, readily adopting residential properties as his territory.

DO'S AND DON'TS

DO feed pets indoors or promptly remove dishes when pets complete their meals outside. Store bags of pet food indoors.

DO clear brush and dense weeds from around property. This deprives rodents of shelter and reduces protective cover for coyotes. Use traps and rodenticides, if needed.

DO use trash barrels equipped with tight clamping devices on the lids, which will prevent spills should they be tipped over by large animals.

DON'T feed or provide water for coyotes or other wild life. This practice abnormally attracts coyotes and promotes increased numbers of rodents, birds, snakes, and other creatures that can provide major portions of the coyote's natural diet.

DON'T put trash cans out the night before scheduled pick-up. Put them out in the morning. This will give the coyote less time to scavenge, and he won't have the cover of darkness.

DON'T use plastic bags as garbage containers. Coyotes can readily rip them open and scatter the contents.

TO PROTECT PETS

Construct six-foot fences with extenders facing outward at the top of each post. (Extenders can be purchased from local fence dealers.) Install two or three strands of wire, extending out at an angle for about 14 inches, completely around fence. **This will prevent easy scaling by coyotes.**

Keep small pets—cats, rabbits, and small dogs—indoors. Don't allow them to run free at any time. They are easy, favored prey.

Large dogs should be brought inside after dark, and never allowed to run loose.

Don't leave domestic pet food outside. Wildlife will soon depend upon it.

TO PROTECT POULTRY AND RABBITS

Run chicken wire from the bottom of chicken coop fence, out about a foot, parallel to the ground. Secure it well. Or bury cinder blocks under fence around the coop. Outfit a rabbit hutch with a solid bottom. A hutch standing above ground, with only a wire bottom, makes your rabbit an easy mark.

ABOVE ALL PROTECT CHILDREN. Never leave small children unattended in areas known to be frequented by coyotes.

If you have carefully followed the suggestions in this brochure, but problems with coyotes continue, please contact your local Animal Control agency, or the County's Agricultural Commissioner for further assistance.