

COYOTE — MANAGEMENT PLAN



**CITY OF
FULLERTON**



Introduction

The City of Fullerton adopted a Coyote Management Plan to provide guidance in dealing with urban and wildlife interface in the City. The plan is based on research, community feedback, assistance from California Department of Fish and Wildlife, best known management practices, and an understanding of the coyote ecology in the urban setting.

The strategy for managing coyotes is based on balancing respect and protection of wildlife and habitat without compromising public safety through the following approach:

- Public education and coyote deterrents designed around co-existence. The goal of education is to decrease coyote attractants, increase pet safety, and reshape coyote behavior. Hazing methods, Wildlife Watch, and housekeeping can alter coyote behavior.
- Communication with the community. Receiving and giving feedback among the community is essential for implementing the Coyote Management Plan.
- Enforcement. Feeding wildlife is known to lead to an increase in wildlife activity. California law prohibits the feeding of wildlife. The Fullerton Police Department will enforce State law pertaining to this activity.
- Public Safety. Reduce potential risks and conflicts between humans, their pets, and coyotes.
- Reporting. The importance of reporting and the City of Fullerton's response.

The goal of this plan is to establish a comprehensive strategy that ensures the safety of residents while promoting coexistence with local wildlife, particularly coyotes. The actions prescribed in this plan are designed to increase the public's knowledge and understanding of coyote behavior so that residents can reduce or eliminate conflicts with coyotes.

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Background

The City of Fullerton's environment comprises a mix of urban areas, parks, natural reserves, and green spaces that may serve as habitats or corridors for coyotes.

The City of Fullerton does not own or have any control over the wild animals found within its boundaries, nor is the City responsible for the actions or damage caused by them. Coyotes are a common and important part of our natural ecosystem. Although the City of Fullerton places a high value on wildlife, some individual animals adapted to urban environments have the potential to cause problems and/or conflicts in specific situations. The City promotes policies supporting prevention and implementation of remedial measures that do not harm the wildlife or their habitats while at the same time ensuring that human safety is a priority in managing human-coyote interactions.

Public Education & Outreach

Coyote education is the key to ensuring Fullerton residents make appropriate decisions regarding their safety, managing their property, and protecting their pets.

The Coyote (Canis latrans)

Coyotes are originally native to California and several other western states. Due to their intelligence, adaptability, and the decline of other predatory species due to urban sprawl, coyotes have expanded their range and are found in all states except Hawaii.

Coyotes play an important role in the urban ecosystem, particularly as a top-predator. They eat a broad range of small animals, including squirrels, mice, rabbits, rats, and gophers. Rodents make up a majority of their diet. In the process, they control the population sizes of these animals, many of which are considered pests to humans. The coyotes also prey on mid-rank predators such as raccoons and opossums. Coyotes keep lower-ranking predator populations in balance.

Coyotes vary in color from gray-brown to yellow-gray. Their backs have tawny-colored underfur and long overcoats with black-tipped guard hairs, forming a dorsal stripe and dark band over their shoulders. Throats and bellies tend to be buff or white in color. Coyotes have long legs, small paws, large pointed ears, and pointed snout, and weigh between 15 and 40 pounds.

Coyote Habitat & Behavior

Coyotes may live alone, in pairs, or in family groups with one breeding pair, generally mating once a year, usually January through February. Social organization and group size are correlated with food availability. The rest of the group is comprised of multiple generations of offspring. Pups are born March through May. The entire group protects the pups though pup mortality averages between 50 and 70 percent in the first year. Pups remain in the den the first six weeks and then travel with the adults. By the end of the summer they are more independent.

Because coyotes are socially organized, the group raises the young and defends their territory from other coyotes. Territories do not overlap. Although they generally live in groups, coyotes often travel alone or in pairs. Coyotes regularly roam an area of about two to five square miles to obtain enough food for the pack members. Normally, each pack is a territorial family group made up of three to ten coyotes. In urban areas, most coyotes live in large parks, greenbelts, and natural open spaces where they find food and cover. They are extremely adaptable in creating territories under a wide range of urban conditions.

Young coyotes may leave the pack at about nine to eleven months of age, but dispersal patterns are highly variable. These juvenile coyotes become transients. Other types of transients include older individuals that can no longer defend their role as upper-level

pack members and are pushed out of the pack. Transient coyotes move all over in narrow undefended zones that exist between pack territories searching for an open habitat to occupy or group to join. They often die before they succeed. It is largely because of the constant influx of transients that coyote eradication programs fail. Removing a group of territorial coyotes will create an undefended area into which the transient coyotes will flow. At all times of the year, numbers of transients are immediately available to replenish any voids created by killing resident coyotes. Furthermore, if either the alpha male or alpha female in a pack is killed, ovulation in other breeding-age females is often triggered and a corresponding increase in the number of litters and/or number of pups per litter is observed.

Humans & Coyotes

Because wild animals conjure up fear in some people, actual sightings and perceptions can become exaggerated or misconstrued. Some observe them with enjoyment, others with indifference and some with fear or concern. Experiences range from animal sightings without incident, to stalking, killing of pets or, at the extreme, an attack on a person. It is important to understand that coyote attacks on humans are very infrequent.

Coexisting with wildlife requires humans to take an active role in keeping coyotes wild. For example, recognize coyote behavior, remove attractants, take precautions for pets, and haze coyotes in neighborhood and community spaces. People living in close proximity to coyotes can respond in a manner designed to change coyote behavior.

While human attacks are very rare, urban landscape development, habituation through intentional and unintentional feeding, pet related incidents and media attention have led some urban residents to fear coyotes. Steps must be taken to address safety concerns, misconceptions, and appropriate responses to potential threats to human safety. It is important to keep in mind that coyotes have been in and around Fullerton for a very long time.

Coyote Attractants:

- Food – Urban areas often support large numbers of rodents, including squirrels, mice, and rats, which coyotes often prey upon. Coyotes can also be attracted into neighborhoods by human-associated food such as pet food, unsecured compost or trash, and fallen fruit.
- Water – Urban areas provide a year-round supply in the form of storm water runoff, artificial lakes, irrigation, pet water dishes, etc., which support both coyotes and their prey. During drought or otherwise dry conditions, water can be as alluring as food, therefore, it is important to remove water bowls set outside for pets and make watering cans unavailable.
- Access to Shelter –Overgrown landscaping, parks, greenbelts, open spaces, golf courses, buildings, sheds, decks and crawl spaces, etc., increase the amount of

cover for coyotes allowing them to remain close to people, pets, homes and businesses without detection. In the spring, when coyotes give birth and begin to raise young, they concentrate their activities around dens or burrows in which their young are sheltered.

- **Unattended Pets** – Pets are a normal part of an urban landscape. Within their territory, coyotes may consider pets as prey or competitors. Free roaming pets, such as cats and small dogs, may attract coyotes into a neighborhood. Minimize risk to pets and do not leave them outside unattended.
- **Cats** – Free-roaming outdoor cats may also be seen as prey. It is important to note that attacks on cats are normal coyote behavior and do not indicate danger for humans. People who feed feral cats are often concerned that coyotes might prey on the cats. These concerns are well founded, as coyotes can be attracted to the outdoor pet food as well.
- **Dogs** – Dogs are vulnerable to coyote confrontations. These incidents generally involve coyotes who are accustomed or habituated to people (usually from feeding), or coyotes who are protecting their territory and pups (usually during breeding season). Small, unattended dogs may be seen as potential prey. It is important to either keep dogs on a six-foot long or shorter leash when outdoors or to stay within six feet of them when on your property. Coyotes may view a dog on a leash longer than six feet as an unattended pet especially when in or near nature preserves or open-spaces such as parks. Attacks on unattended, small dogs are normal coyote behavior and do not indicate a danger to people. Although attacks on larger dogs are rare, coyotes may pursue a large dog when territory is threatened. This generally occurs during breeding season, January through March. During this time, it is especially important to keep dogs on leash and do not leave them unattended when in public or open space areas.
- **Other domestic animals** – Domestic animals kept outside, such as rabbits, may also be viewed as prey. Protect outdoor animals from predators with protective fencing and/or cages. Residents are encouraged to use the **Yard Audit Checklist (Appendix A)** as a tool to help recognize and remove attractants in their yards and neighborhoods.

Ways you can help reduce food attractants for coyotes:

- Never hand feed or otherwise deliberately feed a coyote.
- Avoid feeding pets outside.
- If feeding pets outside, promptly remove the bowl and any leftover food.
- Remove sources of pet food and water that a coyote could easily access.
- Maintain good housekeeping, such as regularly raking areas around bird feeders.
- Remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Place trash bins curbside only on the morning of collection and ensure lids are closed.

Hazing & Behavioral Changes

Hazing is a powerful tool for keeping coyotes at a distance by reinforcing their natural wariness of people. This section explains what hazing is, when and how to do it, and how to avoid common mistakes.

What is hazing? Hazing simply means scaring a coyote away from you, your yard, or your neighborhood. Coyotes are members of the dog family, and just as dogs are trained to adopt good behavior, we can reinforce a coyote's natural instinct to avoid people without harming them.

When is it appropriate to haze?

Don't haze:

- If you think the coyote is sick or injured, call OC Animal Care at (714) 935-6848.
- If it is March through July, and you are in a park or open space and think you could be near a coyote den, or if you think that pups could be present. Allow them breathing room to raise and protect their new families. Be aware that you may encounter a coyote who is trying to haze you away from his den by acting anxious and/or assertive. The coyote may attempt to escort you to a safe distance by hunching his back and walking towards you, or by vocalizing (barking or "huffing"). Please leash dogs and pick up small pets and leave the area calmly.
- If the coyote is at a comfortable distance from you. Seeing a coyote at a distance is no cause for alarm. This means they have adapted to urban environments and may be seen during the day and at night.
- If you encounter a coyote, do not corner it. Always allow the coyote a way to escape.

Haze:

- If a coyote approaches you or if you see a coyote who is comfortable walking your street or visiting your yard.
- Be consistent and persistent: haze every time you see this too-close-for-comfort behavior.
- Do not stop until the coyote has left the area or you risk teaching the coyote that your hazing behavior is "normal," and is nothing to be concerned about.

How to haze:

Hazing can be as simple as removing attractants (passive) or asserting yourself by yelling and waving your arms above your head as you walk toward a coyote (active).

Passive Hazing: The aim is not to harm or harass the coyote. Passive hazing involves removing attractants to create less welcoming habitats for animals. Examples include using motion activated lights or sprinklers, not feeding pets outside, cleaning around bird feeders and BBQs, and thinning vegetation where coyotes may den.

Active Hazing: Active hazing involves reacting to the inappropriate presence of a coyote so that he is frightened or startled and leaves the area. The response to your efforts may vary depending on the individual. Be persistent until the coyote “gets it.”

Active Hazing Tools: Noise makers: your loud voice, whistles, bells, pots, pan lids, shaker cans (soda can filled with pennies & wrapped with aluminum foil), slapping a newspaper. Surprises: pop-up umbrella, motion-activated lights or sprinklers, garden hose, supersoaker spray gun filled with vinegar water.

Begin by acting “Big, Bad, and Loud.” Make and maintain eye contact. Wave your arms, a stick or jacket over your head; jump up and down, yell, or throw objects toward, not at, the coyote. The more dominant you act, the better the coyote will get the message that you are something to be afraid of. Keep at it until the coyote leaves.

Remember, once you start to haze, continue until the coyote leaves the area. If at any time you feel threatened, back away slowly until you are safely out of the area.

Reporting and Response Plan

Coexisting with wildlife requires humans to take an active role in keeping coyotes wild. Recognize coyote behavior, remove attractants, take precautions for pets, and haze coyotes in neighborhood and community spaces. Learning how to respond to a coyote encounter empowers residents and can help reduce undesired coyote behaviors. The public should understand what normal coyote behavior is when living in close proximity with coyotes. For example, vocalization (howling) is normal acceptable behavior and does not indicate aggression.

OC Animal Care will respond to calls that involve sick or injured coyote(s) and calls involving coyotes threatening or injuring people. However, if there is a public safety issue, the Fullerton Police Department will also respond to calls that involve coyote(s) threatening or injuring people.

OC Animal Care and the Fullerton Police Department will notify the California Department of Fish and Wildlife immediately upon an attack on a human being.

- **To report sightings: Contact OC Animal Care**
 - Main Line (8:00am – 5:00pm): (714) 935-6848
 - After-hours Line (5:00pm – 8:00am): (714) 259-1122
- **To report animal attacks/injuries: Contact OC Animal Care**
 - Main Line (8:00am – 5:00pm): (714) 935-6848
 - After-hours Line (5:00pm – 8:00am): (714) 259-1122
- **If a coyote is behaving aggressively or attacking a human: Call 9-1-1**

In response to aggressive coyote behavior the City will make efforts to connect with the reporting party within 48 business hours of notification. Pertinent information should include time of day, proximity to any City park or open space, and identify possible food/water/shelter attractants. The Fullerton Police Department may enlist the help of other City staff members or outside agencies to help identify coyote attractants such as overgrown vegetation that may serve as a hideout or den, trash nuisances in neighborhoods and/or commercial areas, or feeding of strays and/or other wildlife.

Residents are encouraged to use the **Response Matrix (Appendix B)** as a tool to help understand the best response to coyote encounters.

Wildlife Watch Program

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife implements the Wildlife Watch program as a model of the National Neighborhood Watch program. Wildlife Watch is a program that intersects the needs of local agencies and the community to reduce wildlife interactions in the community.

Wildlife Watch empowers local agencies and residents to address and resolve human-wildlife conflicts. Communities are provided the support and training needed to develop integrated wildlife management plans specific to their needs. Wildlife Watch is maintained by a network of committed agencies, community groups and individuals who have completed the required training.

The City of Fullerton and the Wildlife Watch reach more communities with combined efforts. The program can be proactively implemented during early breeding and pup season. When communities, HOA's, etc. hold meetings Wildlife Watch can present best management practices and pet safety information.

If you would like to be placed on an interest list or learn more about participating as a Wildlife Watch volunteer, please call the City of Fullerton Administration Department at (714) 738-6310.

Monitoring and Collecting Data

Tracking wildlife activity and providing timely responses are actions that result in the highest effectiveness of community safety.

The purpose of monitoring human-coyote interactions is to document where coyotes are frequently seen and to identify human-coyote conflict hotspots. Gathering specific data on incidents provides direction of educational campaigns and conflict mitigation efforts, as well as the ability to measure success in reducing conflicts over time.

Data can be used as a proactive mechanism to ward off coyote activity hotspots and as a tool by which to direct the City's efforts.

OC Animal Care documents coyote sightings and provides the City with monthly reports.

Enforcement

Feeding Wildlife

The act of feeding wildlife is known to lead to an increase in wildlife activity. Feeding can attract coyotes and their prey to an area leading to an increased likelihood of creating habituated coyotes and resulting in increases in coyote-human interactions.

California law prohibits feeding wildlife. Fullerton Police Officers, Orange County Animal Control Officers, and Fullerton Code Enforcement Officers will enforce State law(s) pertaining to this activity.

Trapping Coyotes

Pursuant to Title 14, California Code of Regulations 465.5, it is unlawful to trap and relocate furbearing and non-game animals. Property owners may hire a licensed private trapper. Professional trappers may not trap and relocate animals elsewhere. All non-game mammals, such as coyotes must be killed or released immediately once trapped. A property owner may attempt to trap the animal themselves. Property owners must contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to obtain a depredation trap number assigned to their trap. The coyote must be humanely euthanized once captured; relocation is not an option. Studies show coyote relocation is not effective and a relocated coyote will travel hundreds of miles to return to their home range.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife does not interfere with the natural movements and activities of wildlife, unless extraordinary circumstances exist. There is no method for keeping coyotes out of urban areas. Studies show coyote relocation is not effective and a relocated coyote will travel hundreds of miles to return to their home range. Pursuant to Title 14, California Code of Regulations 465.5 trapping is authorized, and the coyote must be humanely euthanized once captured; relocation is not an option.

The City of Fullerton may consider trapping a coyote if it is sick or injured and determined to be a threat to public safety.

Hunting and use of firearms

It is illegal to hunt, trap, or pursue wildlife at any time in the City of Fullerton. No person shall use, carry, or possess firearms of any description, or air-rifles, spring guns, bow-and-arrows, slings or any other forms of weapons potentially inimical to wildlife and dangerous to human safety, or any instrument that can be loaded with and fire blank cartridges, or any kind of trapping device per City of Fullerton Municipal Code Section 9.12.210.

APPENDIX A

City of Fullerton Coyote Yard Audit Checklist (For homeowner use)

Items in your yard may be attracting coyotes or other wildlife. To achieve a wildlife proof yard, ensure that each item is checked with an **OK**.

Item	OK	Fix	N/A	Ways to Mitigate
Food				NEVER hand-feed or intentionally feed a coyote.
Pet food				Never feed pets outdoors; store all pet food securely indoors.
Water sources				Remove water attractants such as pet water bowls.
Bird feeders				Remove bird feeders or clean fallen seed to reduce the presence of small mammals that coyotes prefer to eat.
Fallen fruit				Clean up fallen fruit around trees
Compost				Do not include meat or dairy among compost contents unless fully enclosed.
BBQ grills				Clean up food around barbeque grills after each use.
Trash				Secure all trash containers with locking lids and place curbside the morning of trash pickup. Periodically clean bins to reduce residual odors.
Landscaping				Trim vegetation to reduce hiding places and potential denning sites.
Structure/Outbuildings				Restrict access under decks and sheds, around woodpiles, or any other structure that can provide cover or denning sites for coyotes or their prey.
Fencing				Consider fencing your yard per Fullerton City Code.
Pets				Never leave pets unattended outside.
				Never allow pets to “play” with coyotes.
				Fully enclose outdoor pet kennels.
				Walk pets on a leash no longer than 6 feet in length.

The City of Fullerton encourages all residents to take steps to eliminate attractants on your property to minimize interactions with coyotes. Residents are also urged to share this information with friends and neighbors because minimizing interactions is most effective when entire neighborhoods work together.

APPENDIX B

City of Fullerton Coyote Response Matrix

Coyote Action	Classification	Response	Communication
Heard	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hazing -Report to OC Animal Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Education -Data collected by OC Animal Care
Seen moving or resting in area with no people present			
Seen resting in area with people present	Yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hazing -Report to OC Animal Care -Pet Safety Information -Yard Audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pet Safety Information -Neighborhood Watch -Wildlife Watch engaged
Entering a yard with or without pets			
Entering yard and injuring or killing pet without people present	Orange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hazing -Report to OC Animal Care -Pet Safety Information -Yard Audit -Eliminate attractants -Gather information on specific animals involved -Lethal removal considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community outreach
Biting or injuring pet or pet on leash longer than 6'			
Following or approaching person with or without pet (stalking)	Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hazing -Report to OC Animal Care -Pet Safety Information -Yard Audit -Eliminate attractants -Gather information on specific animals involved -Lethal removal considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -City will contact California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine removal
Entering yard or home with people and pets			
Biting or injuring attended pet or pet on leash 6' or less			
Aggressive, showing teeth, back fur raised, lunging, nipping without contact			
Biting or injuring person		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gather information on specific animal involved -Call 9-1-1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -City will contact California Department of Fish and Wildlife for lethal removal