

# Coyote Information

The City of Palos Hills recognizes the need to maintain public safety, since coyotes are known to inhabit Palos Hills and the surrounding area. Human safety is our top priority, and this guide outlines tactics for safe coexistence with local coyotes. Coyotes are common across the state of Illinois, and generally pose little threat to humans or pets. By following a few simple steps, we can coexist peacefully with them.

## **General Information about Coyotes**

The coyote is a medium-sized member of the dog family that includes wolves and foxes. With pointed ears, and a drooping bushy tail, the coyote often resembles a German shepherd. Coyotes are usually a grayish brown, but coloration can vary from a silver-gray to black. The tail usually has a black tip. Most adults weigh between 25-35 pounds, with a few larger individuals weighing up to 42 pounds.

## **General Coyote Behavior**

Coyotes typically will try avoid humans. Coyotes are territorial pack animals that are most active at night or early morning hours, and during hot summer weather. They usually produce litters in April and May, with a litter size ranging from 5-7 pups. Coyote dens are found in hollowed out tree stumps, under rock outcrops, on a slope, in an existing burrow made by other animals, under brush, or even in open areas.

## **Commonly Asked Questions about Coyotes**

### **Q: Why can't the City hunt or trap the coyotes to remove them?**

**A:** Studies have shown that trapping or hunting programs are largely ineffective. If the conditions that lured the coyotes to an area still exist, hunting or trapping will only temporarily remove them. And it won't be long before other coyotes move in to replace them. Removal programs can also be expensive, either for residents or municipalities, and traps can occasionally capture pets. Many times household pets and other non-target animals are also caught in traps, and many sustain injuries so severe that they die or must be killed.

### **Q: Why are coyotes in Palos Hills?**

**A:** Coyotes thrive in suburban areas because food, water and shelter are abundant. They easily adapt to residential neighborhoods, parks and open spaces and prey on the rabbits, rodents, birds, cats and small dogs that live there. As opportunistic omnivores, they will also help themselves to trash can contents, pet food left outside, and the seeds and fruits of many garden and landscape plants.

### **Q: Why do we have to coexist with coyotes?**

**A:** Because coyotes are native to Illinois and are common across the entire state, it is important to learn to safely coexist with them. Coyotes also serve an important role in local ecosystems by keeping

populations of smaller wild animals and vermin in check. Besides natural areas, they also are living in human-populated areas, near farms, in the suburbs and in cities

**Q: How can I keep my family safe from coyotes?**

**A:** Coyote attacks on humans are very rare. However, coyotes that have become “habituated” to humans may not show fear when encountering humans. Habituation may result from coyotes’ exposure to a constant source of food in backyards or neighborhoods.

- • Never intentionally feed coyotes.
- • Remove food left out for pets or feral animals
- • Do not feed the wildlife. While many of us enjoy the small songbirds in our yards, prolonged use of wild bird seed will attract not only the wild birds but the rabbits, squirrels, mice and gophers. These creatures will in turn attract the coyote and other predatory animals. If you do feed the wild birds, put out only small amounts of seed at a time.
- • Make your trash cans inaccessible. Keep trash can lids securely fastened or keep trash cans in your garage until trash day.

You also can reinforce a fear of humans to discourage coyotes from coming around and establishing their territory in your neighborhood. If a coyote comes too close, discourage this behavior by:

- • Yelling at them
- • Throwing a rock or other object at them
- • Spraying them with a hose
- • Make your yard less desirable to coyotes. (See the Coyote Safety Checklist at the end of this document)

**Q: How can I keep my pets safe from coyotes?**

**A:** According to the Cook County Urban Coyote Research Project, most metropolitan areas in the Midwest have reported an increase in the number of coyote attacks on pets. Coyotes are known to hunt small rodents, such as mice or voles, and small animals like rabbits. But too often coyotes attack pet cats and small dogs. This usually occurs because either food is scarce, the coyote is being territorial, or is protecting a nearby den with pups. The best way to keep your pets safe is to eliminate the risks:

- • Never leave your pet unattended outside, especially at night
- • Always keep your pet on a leash in public areas

- • Keep pet food and water inside to prevent attracting coyotes
- • Use high fences around your yard

**Q: What should I do if a coyote approaches me?**

**A:** The most successful method of frightening a coyote is to appear as large and threatening as possible. Coyotes are frightened by aggressive gestures, loud noises and large forms. Do not run away from the coyote and maintain eye contact. Using a loud, authoritative voice to frighten the animal is particularly effective. By making aggressive gestures toward the animal such as moving arms and legs, throwing rocks, sticks or other objects, the coyote will either flee or end the encounter.

**Coyote Benefits**

Coyotes serve an important ecological function in urban areas. Rodents are the number one food source of the coyote. They will keep these populations in check. Coyotes will rarely take an adult deer, they are primarily predators of deer fawns. According to the Cook County study, coyotes killed 20% to 80% of the fawns in different populations. As a top predator, coyotes are performing an important role in the Chicago region. Increasing evidence indicates that coyotes assist with controlling deer and Canada goose populations. Canada geese have adapted to urban landscapes, much like deer, and at times become overabundant and a nuisance. The coyote will take eggs from the nest but do not take enough adult geese to reduce their population.

**For More Information about Coyotes:**

Source material for this document includes information and research from Kane County Animal Control, the City of Geneva, the Village of Lincolnshire, the Village of Wilmette and the organizations listed below:

**Illinois Department of Natural Resources**

<https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/wildlife/Pages/Coyote.aspx>

**The Cook County Urban Coyote Research Project**

<https://urbancoyotereseach.com/>

**The Humane Society of the United States**

[https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/what-do-about-coyotes?credit=web\\_id250079884](https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/what-do-about-coyotes?credit=web_id250079884)

**Wildlife Illinois**

<https://www.wildlifeillinois.org/sightings/coyote-in-my-neighborhood-or-yard/>

# Coyote Safety Checklist—What You Can Do

A critical element of any coyote management plan is educating people about coyote behavior and what they can do to help deter coyotes from frequenting their neighborhoods. It's important to take the appropriate preventative actions before coyotes establish feeding patterns. Refer to this checklist to remove any conditions that could potentially attract coyotes to your neighborhood:

## **Food and Water Sources**

1. NEVER intentionally feed a coyote!
2. Do not feed feral cats, deer or other wildlife, this attracts coyotes too.
3. Don't feed pets outdoors; store all pet food securely inside.
4. Remove bird feeders or clean up fallen seed to reduce the presence of small mammals that coyotes prey on.
5. Clean up fallen fruit around trees.
6. Do not include meat or dairy among compost contents.
7. Clean up food and grease around barbeque grills after each use.
8. Secure all trash containers with locking lids and place curbside the morning of trash pickup.

## **Pet Safety**

1. Never leave pets unattended outside.
2. Never allow pets to "play" with coyotes.
3. Fully enclose outdoor pet kennels.
4. Walk pets on a leash that is no longer than 6 feet.
5. Enclose property with a fence. 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 hinder coyotes from digging underneath.

## **Remove Favorable Den Sites**

1. Trim vegetation to reduce hiding places and potential denning sites.

2. Restrict access under decks and sheds, around woodpiles, or any other structure that can provide cover or denning sites for coyotes or their prey.
3. Keep your yard bright, install motion-activated lighting.