

City of Palos Hills
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COYOTES

Prompted by public concern of fox and coyote sightings in residential neighborhoods, a study found that coyotes and red foxes seldom live in the same neighborhood. The reasons for this are not clear, but differences in travel corridors may be a factor. Foxes concentrate their activities within a quarter mile of railways, while coyotes show a preference for waterways.

Most people are concerned that a coyote or fox represents a threat to their children or pets. Illinois Department of Natural Resources records indicate 16 coyote attacks nationwide on humans in the past 30 years. The majority of these cases occurred when people tried to hand-feed the animal.

A coyote reminds people of a small German shepherd dog. A coyote weighs 20 to 45 pounds, although the average is 25 pounds. It has a bushy tail with a black tip and is yellowish gray with a whitish throat and belly. Its ears are prominent, and its tail is held below the back while running.

90 percent of a coyote's diet is small mammals, but they will eat birds, snakes, insects, fish, fruit and vegetables. Coyotes are opportunistic hunters, feeding primarily on what is most available: squirrels, voles, mice, rabbits, and injured or sick deer. They rarely kill prey larger than themselves, but will scavenge on a fresh carcass. They are capable of taking a small dog or cat (less than 15 pounds) but rarely take supervised pets.

Coyotes live in prairies, brushy areas and wooded edges but not in heavily wooded areas. They prefer suburban areas with broken forests. Coyotes like to travel along trails/paths or ridges and waterways. They often deposit feces or scent marks with urine along the way. They are mostly active at night but may be seen during the day, especially in the summer when young are more active. They sometimes hunt in family units but are more often alone or in male/female pairs. Coyotes' bark and yips usually increase in power and pitch and end in a long, flat howl that can carry two or three miles. They are known to howl at sirens or whistles. Howls increase during mating season and decrease when they have their young. Young coyotes howl at a higher pitch than the adults. They are born in April and May in dens found along drainage ditches, fence row or under abandoned buildings. Young coyotes are on their own at six to nine months.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

1. Do not approach wildlife, especially coyotes. If you do encounter a coyote;
 - Show your dominance: remember, you are bigger and scarier than you think.
 - Make loud noises
 - Clap your hands
 - Wave your arms
 - Blow a whistle
 - Shout
 - Stand your ground, and don't run
2. Coyotes are creatures of habit. If you encounter a coyote at the same place and same time while walking your pet, you may want to change your path or time of your walk.
3. When outside, keep small dogs and cats on leashes. Stay with your pets while outside, especially during the evening and early morning. Keep unleashed cats indoors.
4. Do not encourage coyotes by feeding them.
5. Keep pet food and water dishes inside, especially at night.
6. Do not allow spillage to accumulate outside of bird feeders
7. Keep grills and barbecues clean. Even small food scraps may attract animals.
8. If possible, do not keep garbage cans outside. If garbage cans are kept outside, secure the lids tightly.
9. Use welded wire to prevent animals from accessing openings under decks, elevated sheds, concrete slabs and porches. Secure outside access to crawl spaces.

PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS

Coyotes are not considered to be a significant source of infectious diseases that can be transmitted to humans. However, as members of the dog family, coyotes may carry distemper, sarcoptic mange, heartworm and many other common canine diseases. Keeping your pets vaccinated will help prevent possible transmission.

Take care,

Wendy Perillo
Animal Control