

COYOTES AND PET SAFETY

Coyote-Pet Best Management Practices (BMPs)

- Place pets on a short leash (6-feet or less).
- Be cautious when walking your pet between the hours of dusk and dawn and in heavily vegetated areas where coyotes may be present.
- While walking your pet, bring a noise maker (*e.g.* whistle, air horn, soda can w/pennies, etc.). Making noise will alert wildlife to your presence and allow time for it to move away from you and your pet.
- Before letting pets out at night, make noise and flash lights to startle wildlife that may be in your yard.
- Haze coyotes until they leave the area (see Pages 13-14). Hazing makes coyotes feel uncomfortable and will encourage them to retreat and stay out of the area.

If a Coyote Approaches Too Closely

- Bring your pet close.
- Do not run or turn your back to the coyote.
- Make yourself appear larger and be as loud as possible.
- Wave your arms and throw objects towards the coyote, but do not attempt to hurt it.
- Back away slowly while facing the coyote.

Cats

Coyotes primarily eat small mammals such as mice, rats, and rabbits. Free-roaming outdoor cats are similar sized prey for coyotes. It is important to note that attacks on free-roaming outdoor cats are normal coyote behavior and do not indicate a danger for people. A safe cat is an indoor cat. In fact, indoor cats generally live about five times longer than free-roaming cats. The only way to protect cats from coyotes and other dangers of outdoor life such as cars, disease, pesticides, dogs at large, and other wildlife (bobcats, alligators, birds of prey, opossums, *Bufo/cane toads*) is to keep cats indoors. Outdoor cats can also threaten native wildlife and are known to kill birds, reptiles, and other wildlife. Studies suggest that feral cats are responsible for the vulnerability and extinction of many species of backyard native birds. Coyotes restrict the home range of outdoor cats, limiting their impact on native and migratory bird populations.

Dogs

Dogs also can be vulnerable to coyote confrontations. These incidents generally involve coyotes who are accustomed or habituated to people (usually due to wildlife feeding), or coyotes who are protecting their territory and pups (usually during breeding season).

- It is important to either keep dogs on a leash 6-feet long or shorter when outdoors or to stay within six feet of them when outside. (Coyotes may view a dog on a leash longer than six feet as an unattended pet.) Attacks on unattended, small dogs are normal coyote behavior and do not indicate a danger for people.
- Although attacks on larger dogs are rarer, coyotes will sometimes go after a large dog when they feel that their territory is threatened. This generally occurs during the coyote breeding season, which takes place from January through March.
- Fences can help keep coyotes out of yards, although coyotes have been known to scale 6-foot barriers. Fences must comply with all applicable City regulations.

Other Pets

Other pets kept outside such as birds, rabbits, lizards, and chickens may also be viewed as prey by coyotes. Safeguard these animals with protective fencing and ensuring they are confined in sturdy cages or pens each evening.

Disease

As wild canines, coyotes are susceptible to many of the same diseases and parasites that affect domestic dogs. While these diseases may occur in fairly high rates in coyotes, they are rarely transmitted to people or pets because of low pathogen survival rates in the environment or because the coyote may be a "dead-end" host. According to the Florida Department of Health, there has been only one confirmed case of rabies in coyotes in the last 20 years (1998-2017). Pet owners should discuss appropriate preventative care with their pet's veterinarian.