

City of Centennial, CO

Coyote Management Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide strategic actions that increase the community's knowledge and understanding of how to live with coyotes, and guidelines for responses to conflicts with coyotes. This plan seeks to give structure and definition to resolve human-coyote conflicts in a thoughtful, consistent and expedient manner. The plan also seeks to identify and achieve a balance between the importance of human safety and the native ecology of the region.

Strategic Plan

This plan includes (1) an education program that is ongoing and seasonally appropriate, (2) information about the rights and responsibilities of private property owners, (3) monitoring coyote activity, (4) implementing hazing programs appropriate for residents, volunteers and staff to implement as a method to instill natural wildlife wariness, and (5) lethal control on private and public property as determined to be necessary for the public safety. The City is working with many stakeholders to continuously develop and implement this plan, understanding that this is not a static plan, but rather one that may be situational and strategic in nature. Additionally, as the plan unfolds and the dynamics of the issue in question change, modifications to the plan may be advisable.

Definitions

The following definitions will be used by the City in the process of obtaining information on which to base the decisions to implement different portions of the plan. If standard definitions and methods of obtaining and interpreting data are adopted by the stakeholders, the information on which to develop and implement plans and programs will be more scientific. These definitions will most likely be modified and clarified as the stakeholders work through the process of identifying standard definitions.

The following definitions are listed in "order of contact" between humans and coyotes:

1. *Observation*: The act of noticing or taking note, specifically an observation of tracks, scat, and vocalizations, or other evidence of their presence.
2. *Sighting*: Visual observation of a coyote.
3. *Encounter*: An unexpected "direct meeting" between human and coyote that is without incident.
4. *Incident*: A conflict between a human and a coyote where a coyote exhibits behavior creating an unsafe situation for the human. Most attacks on pets fall within this definition.

5. *Attack*: A human is injured or killed by a coyote.

These are descriptions of coyote behavior (listed as a continuum):

1. Nuisance Coyote: A nuisance coyote presents habituated, depredating and/or menacing behavior.
 - a. *Habituated Coyote*: A coyote that appears to frequently associate with humans or human related food sources, and exhibits little wariness of the presence of people.
 - b. *Depredating*: A coyote that is preying on pets or livestock.
 - c. *Menacing Coyote*: A coyote that exhibits aggravated abnormal behavior that does not qualify it as a dangerous coyote. This may include coyote incidents and/or encounters that were serious in nature or a coyote or group of coyotes that could potentially endanger public safety.
2. Dangerous Coyote: A coyote that has attacked a person, exhibits unprovoked aggressive behavior towards a human(s) and/or poses a significant threat to human safety.

General definitions:

1. Coexistence: To exist together at the same time. Coexistence is not passive, but active on the human's part, trying to limit wildlife habitat through exclusion or removal. Coexistence provides a mechanism by which humans obtain and maintain a high level of knowledge and understanding of coyote ecology, behaviors and appropriate responses.
2. Habitat: Habitat is a place where a coyote lives and grows. Habitat includes food, water, and shelter.
3. Hazing: Hazing coyotes is an activity or series of activities that is conducted in an attempt to change the behaviors of habituated coyotes or to instill healthy fear of people back into the local coyote populations. Hazing activity is not intended to physically damage the coyote, property, or humans.

Aggressive Hazing: Aggressive hazing techniques, e.g. paint balls, pepper balls, slingshots, etc., may be employed situationally and on substantiated cases only. Because of the safety issues associated with aggressive hazing techniques, the City will employ only highly skilled and trained experts or volunteers to assist.

Coyote Education and Awareness

The first and ultimately best element of the program is an education and awareness plan. This element uses in-house resources, the City's website and newsletters, printed material, and an unscientific mechanism to record the coyote activity. The City will obtain educational materials from organizations that are knowledgeable in the areas of coyote ecology and behavior of coyotes and use trained volunteers and staff to facilitate the distribution of these educational materials as needed.

Educational and awareness programs will be provided for schools, neighborhood and district meetings, as well as other opportunities as they arise. The City will systematically contact community and educational groups to schedule the distribution of the information either by presentation or printed materials (largely focusing on problem areas).

Information about excluding or removing areas of habitat from residential property, identifying the attractants and removing them, as well as descriptions of hazing methods and tools that may be used to discourage coyotes from areas close to residential areas will be provided.

Plan:

1. Obtain, with permission, educational materials from organizations that are knowledgeable in the area of coyote ecology and behavior.
2. Identify and organize staff and volunteers that are available to provide the education and awareness materials to the residents.
3. Contact schools, community groups, homeowner organizations, libraries, medical centers, churches, recreation areas, and other groups where residents gather or obtain information.
4. Arrange with the organizations a time to distribute information concerning coyotes via presentation, printed materials, articles in newsletters, or other means.
5. Distribute the information.
6. Follow up with the organization within thirty (30) days after distribution for feedback and further distribution if requested or needed.
7. Continually update the information available on the website and through newsletters to address seasonal differences, e.g. mating season, etc.
8. Schedule additional distribution of information on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly, seasonally, etc.) to make sure that current information is available throughout the community.

Coyote Hazing Education Program

The City will implement a coyote hazing educational program for residents. This educational program will include the benefits of coyote hazing and demonstrate suggested techniques. This educational program will become available at any time

when the interactions between the humans and coyotes change from observation and sightings to encounters and incidents.

The City will implement this educational program in conjunction with key stakeholders including the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office, parks and recreation districts, humane organizations, and community organizations/schools. Hazing techniques are implemented to change the behaviors of habituated coyotes and include techniques that can be implemented by residents and people that are not trained law enforcement personnel, e.g. air horns or throwing rocks and sticks. This component of the plan includes only those techniques that can safely be used by residents, volunteers and staff. The more aggressive techniques will only be implemented by trained personnel including paintball guns, slingshots and other projectile weapons/instruments.

Plan:

1. Incident tracking and creation of a centralized data base of reports.
2. Identify the geographical areas where the coyotes have become habituated. This requires receiving information through the coyote sighting reports of habituated coyotes.
3. Contact the landowners, e.g. homeowner associations, community groups, libraries, schools, churches, parks and recreation officials, etc., in the areas of those reports and work with the landowners to develop a plan.
4. Identify the groups and individuals that will assist with the distribution of information.
5. Provide written and verbal information to the landowners on the possible types and methods of hazing. The City may provide tools for use in the hazing process, e.g. air horns, instructions for making hazing tools (cans with rocks), etc.
6. Schedule volunteers and staff to go to the identified areas, observe the coyote sightings and demonstrate the hazing techniques to the residents, school officials, etc.
7. Maintain a regular schedule of hazing activities for a sustained period of time (TBD) to achieve the desired change in the behavior of the coyotes for the highest possible long-term success.
8. Follow up after the coyote behavior has changed to see if further action is needed.
9. Contact adjacent landowners to the geographical areas where hazing techniques have been employed and inform them of the hazing activities. The adjacent landowners may choose to mimic the hazing activities, further encouraging the change in the behavior of the local coyote population. This effort may, on occasion, cross jurisdictional boundaries requiring coordinated efforts between the City and its neighbors.

Lethal Control Measures

The City may implement a program of lethal control when the interactions between humans and coyotes change from encounters and incidents to attacks or the coyote behavior changes from nuisance to dangerous. Information on the behavior of the coyotes will be obtained through the reports received by the City and in conjunction with the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Lethal control may be utilized when education and hazing have been employed and are not effective in changing the behavior of a habituated coyote and that coyote has become dangerous, or if a coyote poses an immediate danger to a human. The City recognizes that it may be difficult to identify the specific coyote that has become problematic and will take all reasonable measures to obtain information that is as accurate as possible so that any lethal control measures employed are aimed at the offending coyote and not used indiscriminately.

Private Property:

Property owners inside of the City may use lawful methods on their property to control nuisance wildlife. The State of Colorado prohibits the poisoning of animals for everything but undesirable pests defined in CRS Title 35. Intentionally placing poison where domestic pets and non-targeted animals or humans can access it is a violation of the statutes.

In November 1996, Colorado voters approved Amendment 14. This constitutional amendment created a “method of take” prohibition for wildlife with respect to the use of leghold and conibear type traps, snares and poisons. There were two exemptions written into the amendment – specific to the “method of take”. One is for agricultural damage, and the other is to address human health and safety. A property owner must apply for the human health and safety exemption through Tri-County Health Department to lawfully use these specific methods.

Public Spaces:

The City is responsible for deciding whether to use lethal control for nuisance wildlife on in public spaces. The City would request and consider direction from CDOW concerning this decision and would act in cooperation with the Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office to determine the best course of action.

Plan:

1. Obtain information from CDOW, Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office, citizen reports, school district officials, or other authorities that can identify and document that a coyote’s behavior is “dangerous”.
2. Assess whether adequate education and hazing techniques have been employed, and if there are other options that are available.
3. Employ other options if those are viable solutions.

4. If lethal control is the only option, consider the advice of CDOW and Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office concerning the proper method to be used, e.g. shooting or trapping. That advice will be based on the evidence provided and an evaluation of the geographical location in question, e.g. highly residential or open space.
 5. Provide immediate communications to the surrounding residential and school properties advising them of the potential unsafe activity of the coyote(s).
 6. In all cases the City would prefer to notify the residents and landowners of the lethal method to be used, unless adequate time is not available for that communication to occur.
 7. If shooting is the recommended method, the City will secure the company or agency to shoot the coyote.
 8. If trapping is recommended, apply for a trapping exemption through Tri-County Health Department, and if the exemption is obtained, hire a private trapper to identify and trap the offending coyote(s). The City will require that the trapper posts clear signage and employ public safety measures to notify the residents and landowners.
 - a. City will keep a pre-approved list of qualified observers, trappers and shooters for use in the event lethal measures are necessary.
 - b. All required permits/applications with the Tri-County Health Department will be on file at the City in preparation of submitting to Tri-County in the event of an emergency situation.
 9. Provide comprehensive follow up communications to the surrounding residential and school properties giving them the update and any additional information needed.
 10. Once the offending coyote(s) has been removed, initiate an immediate and comprehensive education and awareness program in that area.
 11. Follow up with residents and agencies in that area for several months to make sure that education and hazing techniques are being utilized.
 12. Use volunteers and stakeholder groups as necessary for community outreach and education.
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