City of Huntington Beach Coyote Management Plan 2022



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Executive Summary

The intent of this Coyote Management Plan (Plan) is to provide guidance for staff in dealing with urban and wildlife interface in Huntington Beach. The Management Plan is based on research, community feedback, best known management practices, and an understanding of the coyote ecology in the urban setting. The Plan includes a full spectrum of management tools to deal with coyotes in an urban area.

Goal

The goal of this Plan is to support the community and provide tools to coexist with urban coyotes through education, behavior modification, and development of a tiered response to coyote behavior. The actions prescribed in this plan are designed to increase citizens' knowledge and understanding of coyote behavior, and make clear how this knowledge and understanding of coyote behavior can reduce or eliminate conflicts with coyotes.

Strategy

The strategy for managing coyotes is based on balancing respect and protection of wildlife and habitat without compromising public safety. It shall be effected through a three-pronged approach:

- <u>Public education and coyote deterrents designed around co-existence</u>. 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.
- <u>Communication with the community.</u> Receiving and giving feedback among the community is essential for implementing the Coyote Management Plan.
- <u>Enforcement</u>. Feeding wildlife is known to lead to an increase in wildlife activity. California law
 prohibits the feeding of wildlife. The Huntington Beach Police Department will enforce State law
 pertaining to this activity.

Background

The City of Huntington Beach does not own or have any control of the wild animals found within its boundaries, nor is the City responsible for the actions or damage caused by them. These animals are a common and important part of our natural ecosystem.

Although the City of Huntington Beach 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.

However, human safety is a priority in managing human-coyote interactions.

Education and Outreach

Education is the key to having residents make appropriate decisions regarding their safety or managing their property and pets. This involves decreasing attractants, increasing pet safety, and creating reasonable expectations of normal coyote behavior.

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.

Coyote Appearance

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

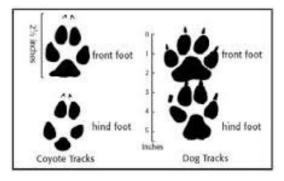
How and where do Coyotes Live?

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. Litter size depends on available resources and the number of coyotes in the area. 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, yet, may still travel with parents and siblings.

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 individuals, and the number of mature coyotes in the pack is often related to the amount of food resources in the territory. In the urban areas, most coyotes live in large parks, golf courses, greenbelts, and natural open space where they find food and cover. Thus, their territory may follow the park or open space boundaries. 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 (many are hit by vehicles). 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.

How do Humans Perceive Coyotes?

People respond to coyotes in various ways. 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. Coyote attacks on humans are very infrequent. Although such incidents generate significant media coverage, they remain a rare event.

Because wild animals conjure up fear in some people, actual sightings and perceptions may become exaggerated or misconstrued (see Appendix A). The wide range in perceptions by Huntington Beach residents supports the need for consistent educational messages to clarify management and response techniques.

NEVER FEED COYOTES

REPORT FEEDING www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote 714-960-8811

Behavioral Changes in the Urban Environment

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.

Human behavior.

Coyote Attractants

Coyotes are drawn to urban and suburban areas for food, water, and access to Shelter.

behavior can shape animal

- <u>Food</u> Urban areas often support large numbers of rodents, including mice and rats. Coyotes can be attracted into neighborhoods by human-associated food such as pet food, unsecured compost or trash, and fallen fruit.
- <u>Water</u> 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, so remove water bowls set outside for pets and make watering cans unavailable.

• <u>Access to Shelter</u> –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.

• <u>Unattended Pets</u> – 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.

 <u>Cats</u> – 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.

Protect cats and small dogs from coyotes

Keep primarily indoors.

Let outside in a secure enclosure.

When outside accompany or keep on leash and/or harness.

DO NOT FEED FERAL CATS

 <u>Dogs</u> – 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.

Do not allow dogs off leash, it is against the law and is unsafe.

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.

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 Huntington Beach for a very long time.

Reduce food attractants in urban and suburban areas:

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.
Never include meat or dairy in a compost pile.
Bag especially attractive food wastes, such as meat scraps or leftover pet food.
Keep trash in high-quality containers with tight-fitting lids.
Place trash cans curbside only on the morning of collection.

Hazing

Hazing is a process whereby a person or a number of individuals encountering a coyote intimidate the animal urging it to leave a situation.

The following are various types of hazing methods:

, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	Stand your ground.		
Basic Hazing	Don't turn your back.		
	Yell or make frightening noises.		
Aggressive Hazing	Be quicker and more aggressive.		
	Throw projectiles like stones near the animal.		
	Spray with a hose.		
	Create heightened fear of contact.		

For more options see Appendix B- Hazing Manual.

<u>Hazing should be ongoing whenever coyotes are present</u>. Hazing must continue once it begins until the animal leaves. Otherwise, the coyote will learn to wait until the person gives up. Following through with hazing will create an animal more intimidated of people

<u>Hazing does not involve injuring the animal, only threat of injury</u>. An injured animal becomes less predictable than a healthy one.

A healthy coyote is unlikely to escalate a situation with a person who aggressively hazes. A common concern with hazing involves potential danger to the hazer. Coyotes are instinctually skittish which makes hazing useful. It is important that the hazer provides the coyote a clear escape route free to flee and not corner the animal; a cornered animal may decide that attacking the hazer is the only option.

Hazing is not appropriate in nature reserves or similar open space unless the coyote exhibits threatening behavior to persons or leashed pets.

Hazing should be monitored to assess effectiveness and to determine if further action or more aggressive hazing is needed.

Wildlife Watch

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 Huntington Beach 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.

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.

The Coyote Action and Response Plan (Attachment C) is a tool to identify and classify the levels of human and coyote interaction. OC Animal Care will respond to calls that involve sick or injured coyote(s). However, if there is a public safety issue, the Huntington Beach Police Department will respond to calls involving coyote(s) threatening or injuring people.

If a human is attacked and physically injured by a coyote, the Huntington Beach Police Department will work with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to thoroughly investigate the incident, identify and lethally remove coyotes in the geographic area. Lethal removal will also be considered if there is a public safety issue.

REPORT FEEDING & SIGHTINGS

www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote

HBPD 714-960-8811



For a coyote behaving aggressively or attacking a person Call 9-1-1

Communicating with the Public

To effectively implement the Coyote Management Plan receiving and giving feedback among the community is essential. While coyotes will always exist in our urban environment, it is important to connect with residents when there are aggressive behaviors or attacks and to maintain awareness throughout the year.

Taking communal, proactive measures as previously mentioned can create an environment that is inhospitable to coyotes.

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 park or open space, and identify possible food/water/shelter attractants. The Huntington Beach Police Department may enlist the help of others to identify coyote attractants such as overgrown vegetation that serves as a hideout or den, trash nuisances in neighborhoods or commercial areas, or feeding of strays or other wildlife.

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.

Enforcement

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. Huntington Beach Police Officers, Orange County Animal Control Officers, and Huntington Beach Code Enforcement Officers will enforce State law(s) and Huntington Beach Municipal Code Section 13.48.075 pertaining to this activity.

California Code of Regulations Title 14. §251.1. Harassment of Animals Except as otherwise authorized in these regulations or in the Fish & Game Code, no person shall harass, herd or drive any game or nongame bird or mammal or furbearing mammal. For the purposes of this section, harass is defined as an intentional act which disrupts an animal's normal behavior patterns, which includes, but is not limited to breeding, feeding, or sheltering.

City of Huntington Beach Municipal Code §13.48.075 Feeding Wildlife on City Property Prohibited

Unless specifically authorized by the Director of Community Services in writing, no person shall feed, disturb, or have physical contact with wildlife on City property.

IS YOUR YARD UNINVITING TO COYOTES?

ITEMS IN YOUR YARD MAY BE ATTRACTING COYOTES OR OTHER WILDLIFE. TO MINIMIZE CONFLICTS WITH WILDLIFE. REMOVE ATTRACTANTS AND ENCOURAGE NEIGHBORS TO DO THE SAME.

MARK OFF EACH ITEM BELOW WITH A YES TO ACHIEVE A WILDLIFE PROOF YARD.

ALL FOOD SOURCES SHOULD BE REMOVED AND/OR SECURELY STORED INDOORS. NEVER HAND-FEED OR INTENTIONALLY FEED WILDLIFE.

YES NO

PETS ARE FED INDOORS AND FOOD IS SECURELY STORED INDOORS. PET FOOD

WATER SOURCES ARE REMOVED IN DRY CLIMATES. WATER

BINS ARE SECURED WITH LOCKING LIDS AND WASHED TO REDUCE ODORS. **TRASH**

FALLEN FRUIT IS PICKED UP OR PICKED FROM TREES BEFORE IT FALLS. **FALLEN FRUIT**

LIDS ON COMPOST BINS ARE KEPT CLOSED AND LOCKED. **COMPOST**

FOOD RESIDUE ON OR AROUND BBQ GRILL IS CLEANED AFTER EACH USE AND BBQ IS KEPT COVERED WHILE NOT IN USE. **BBQ GRILLS**

FEEDERS ARE REMOVED OR FALLEN SEED IS CLEANED TO REDUCE THE **BIRD FEEDERS** PRESENCE OF SMALL ANIMALS.

LUSH LANDSCAPING CAN PROVIDE AMPLE FOOD. WATER AND SHELTER FOR COYOTES.

YES NO

VEGETATION VEGETATION IS TRIMMED TO REDUCE HIDING PLACES FOR WILDLIFE.

ACCESS UNDER DECKS. IN SHEDS. NEAR WOOD PILES OR OTHER **OUTBUILDINGS** AREAS IS RESTRICTED TO PREVENT COYOTES FROM DENNING.

REAR YARDS AND SIDE YARDS ARE ENCLOSED WITH 8 FOOT FENCING **FENCING** (OR WITH 6 FOOT FENCING WITH AN ADDED EXTENSION OR ROLLER TOP).

MOTION MOTION SENSOR SPRINKLERS, LIGHTS OR OTHER FIXTURES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO DETER WILDLIFE. **SENSORS**

> WATCH OVER PETS TO ENSURE THEIR SAFETY AND ENSURE THEY ARE NOT INDIRECTLY ATTRACTING WILDLIFE.

YES NO

PETS ARE NEVER LEFT UNATTENDED OUTSIDE. **OUTDOORS**

PETS ARE NEVER ALLOWED TO "PLAY" WITH COYOTES OR OTHER WILDLIFE. PLAYTIME

IF LEFT OUTDOORS, PETS ARE FULLY ENCLOSED IN CATIO OR DOGIO. **ENCLOSURES**

FECAL MATTER IS REGULARLY DISCARDED TO ELIMINATE ODORS FROM **PET WASTE** ATTRACTING COYOTES.

PETS ARE ALWAYS WALKED ON A LEASH NO LONGER THAN 6 FEET LONG. WALKS*

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote







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COYOTE MANAGEMENT PLAN APPENDIX B

COYOTE HAZING GUIDELINES:

How to Haze for Effective Reshaping of Coyote Behavior

Generally, coyotes are reclusive animals who avoid human contact. Coyotes who've adapted to urban and suburban environments, however, may realize there are few real threats and approach people or feel safe visiting yards even when people are present. These coyotes have become habituated (lost their fear of humans), likely due to the ready availability of food in our neighborhoods. Sometimes, this food is deliberately provided by people who like to watch wild animals or misguidedly feel they are helping them by feeding. These bold coyotes should not be

tolerated or enticed, but definitely given the message that they should not be so brazen.



Hazing is a method that makes use of deterrents to move an animal out of an area or discourage an undesirable behavior or activity. Hazing can help maintain a coyote's fear of humans and deter them from neighborhood spaces such as backyards and play spaces.

The following guidelines are adapted from the Denver, Colorado coyote problem mitigation program's Hazing Guidelines, written by the Natural Areas Program of the Denver Parks and Recreation Department in October 2009. These guidelines have proven very successful at correcting problematic coyote behavior both in the short and longer term.

Methods of Hazing include:

Using a variety of different hazing tools is critical; coyotes can habituate to individual items, sounds, and actions.

- Yelling and waving your arms while approaching the coyote
- Noisemakers: Voice, whistles, air horns, bells, soda cans filled with pennies or dead batteries, pots and pans banged together
- Projectiles: sticks, small rocks, cans, tennis balls, rubber balls
- Other: hoses, water guns with vinegar water, spray bottles with vinegar water, pepper spray, bear repellant, walking sticks

"Go Away Coyote!"

- The simplest method of hazing a coyote involves being **loud** and **large**:
 - Stand tall, wave your arms and yell at the coyote, approaching it if necessary, until it runs away.
 - Follow this link for a demonstration: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDm9wjfcdbw&feature=player_embedded)
- If a coyote has not been hazed before, he may not immediately run away when you
 yell at him. If this happens, you may need to walk towards the coyote and increase
 the intensity of your hazing.
- The coyote may run away, but then stop after a distance and look at you. It is
 important to continue to haze the coyote until he completely leaves the area. You
 may need to use different tactics, such as noisemakers, stomping your feet, or
 spraying the coyote with a hose, to get him to leave.

Dog-walking Tools

- There are several tools that you can carry with you while walking your dog that can be used to repel coyotes. (Remember to always walk your dog on a leash.) These include:
 - Homemade noisemakers (follow this link for "recipe"): http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/programs/conservation/urbanWildlife/coyotes/deterrent.php
 - Whistle or small air horn (you can purchase small air horn "necklaces")
 - Squirtguns
 - Pepper spray
 - Pick up sticks or rocks and throw them towards the coyote

In Your Yard:

Remember, keeping pets and pet food inside is the best way to keep coyotes out of your yard. If you do encounter coyotes, all of the above methods can be used in your yard at home. First, try the "Go Away Coyote!" method (yell and wave your arms as you approach the coyote). Here are some additional methods you can also use:

- Squirt the coyote with your garden hose
- Bang pots and pans together

Remember:

- NEVER run away from a coyote!
- The coyote may not leave at first, but if you approach it closer and/or increase the intensity of your hazing, it will run away.
- If the coyote runs away a short distance and then stops and looks at you, continue hazing it until it completely leaves the area.
- After you have successfully hazed a coyote, he or she may return again. Continue to haze the coyote as you did before; it usually takes only one or two times to haze a coyote away for good.
- Coyotes are skittish by nature and as a rule do not act aggressively towards
 aggressive people. However, engaging animals that are sick or injured can result in
 unpredictable behavior. If you suspect that a coyote is sick or injured, contact the
 proper authorities and DO NOT interact with the coyote.



- The more often an individual coyote is hazed, by a variety of tools and techniques and a variety of people, the more effective hazing will be for changing behavior.
- The coyote being hazed must be able to recognize that the potential threat is coming from a person. (Hiding behind a bush and throwing rocks, for example, will not be effective.)
- Techniques and tools can be used in the same manner for one animal or multiple animals. Usually there is a dominant animal in the group who will respond, and others will follow her lead.
- Certain levels of hazing must always be maintained so that future generations of coyotes do not learn or return to unacceptable habits or behaviors.
- Educating the public about removing coyote attractants, proper pet care and safety, and coyote behavior are critical parts of a successful coyote plan.



COYOTE ACTION AND RESPONSE PLAN

Coyote Action	Classification	Response	Communication
REPORT COYOTE FEEDING		www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote	Education Pet safety information Enforcement
Heard	Green	Hazing	Education
Seen moving or resting in area with no people present		Report to huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote	Data plotted and available on huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote
Seen resting in area with people present	Yellow	Hazing Report to huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote	Pet safety information
Entering a yard with or without pets		Pet safety information Yard audit	Neighborhood Watch Wildlife Watch engaged
Entering yard and injuring or killing pet w/o people present	Orange	Hazing Report to www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote Pet safety information	
Biting or injuring pet or pet on leash longer than 6'		Yard audit Eliminate attractants Gather information on specific animals involved Lethal removal considered	Community Outreach
Following or approaching person with or without pet (Stalking)	Red	Hazing	
Entering yard or home with people & pets		Report to www.huntingtonbeachca.gov/coyote Pet safety information Yard audit	City will contact CDFW to determine removal
Biting or injuring attended pet or pet on leash 6' or less		Eliminate attractants Gather information on specific animals involved	City will contact CDFW to determine removal.
Aggressive, showing teeth, back fur raised, lunging, nipping w/o contact		Lethal removal considered	
Biting or injuring person		Gather information on specific animal involved CALL 9-1-1	City will contact California Department of Fish and Wildlife for Lethal removal.

