

YOU LIVE NEAR COYOTES

(Whether you know it or not)

Coyotes are found throughout Virginia, including in urban and suburban areas. Coyotes are primarily nocturnal, meaning they come out mostly at night. However, coyotes are also active during the day, especially during the spring and summer months when they are searching for food to feed pups. Contrary of what many people think, seeing a coyote during the day does not indicate it has rabies and is generally not cause for alarm.

The best way to prevent coyotes from becoming a problem is to avoid giving them a reason to come near your home. Keep reading to get more tips.



SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Coyotes are present in every county of the Commonwealth and in many cities. Virginia's citizens, communities, local governments, and DGIF share responsibility in helping to prevent problems and keeping coyotes wild.

BENEFITS OF URBAN COYOTES

Although frequently unwelcome by people living in urban and suburban neighborhoods, coyotes can provide benefits to these communities. Coyotes eat rats and other destructive rodents in cities, as well as rabbits and groundhogs that munch on flowers and gardens in suburban areas. They also prey upon fawns in overpopulated deer herds and help control Canada geese that wreak havoc on golf courses and baseball fields. Research has even shown that coyotes reduce the presence of free roaming and feral cats in urban natural areas, thereby increasing songbird nesting success.

An aggressive coyote should never be welcome anywhere in Virginia, but most urban coyotes do their best to avoid humans and seldom cause issues. Developing a better understanding of coyote ecology and behavior helps reduce coyote conflicts and increases chances of successful coexistence.

To speak with a wildlife biologist about problems with coyotes, please call the Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline:

1-855-571-9003

Living with COYOTES near your home in Virginia



PREVENTING CONFLICTS

Coyotes are normally secretive and have a natural fear of humans. However, coyotes living near human development can become accustomed to the presence of people, particularly if they are being fed (intentionally or unintentionally). Coyotes are opportunistic and will sometimes take advantage of human-related food sources such as unsecured trash, uneaten pet food, and organic matter in compost piles. Cats and small dogs can also become prey items. Bird feeders that attract squirrels and other small mammals may bring coyotes too close to houses. Although most coyotes in urban environments eat natural foods such as mice, rabbits, deer, and fruit, artificially-fed coyotes almost always become a problem.

Coyotes that become accustomed to the presence of people may become bold and possibly aggressive. Aggressive coyotes can be very dangerous and their presence should not be taken lightly. Attacks on humans are rare, but not unheard of. Avoiding potential coyote conflicts requires that you become aware of coyote behavior in your area and take the necessary preventative measures to keep them from being attracted to your property.



Here are some easy ways to reduce the chance of having a coyote attracted to your property.

- *If you are feeding wildlife, STOP.*
- *Keep trash inside until the morning of trash pick-up or place trash in an animal proof container.*
- *If you feed pets outside, make sure their bowls are empty afterwards.* Feeding feral cats is an especially bad idea in areas frequented by coyotes.
- *Remove bird feeders and clean up fallen seed to keep small mammals from being attracted to the area.*
- *Close up all openings under and into your buildings to prevent their use as den sites.*
- *Clear fallen fruit from around trees.*
- *Remove or clean up brushy areas close to your home that provide potential cover for coyotes and their prey.*
- *Supervise small pets when outside and walk dogs on a leash.* Cats should be kept indoors and not allowed to roam free. In rare instances, larger dogs can be viewed as a threat particularly from January to June during mating and pup-rearing seasons.

DEFEND YOUR SPACE

It is important not to encourage, or even tolerate, coyotes around your residence. The longer they are allowed to remain, the bolder and more aggressive they are likely to become to humans and pets.

It is everyone's responsibility to dissuade coyotes from using and frequenting areas used by humans. Once coyotes become unafraid and aggressive towards people, it's unlikely the habituation process can be reversed.

If you observe a coyote near your home, find a safe place where you can:

- *Yell at the coyote while waving your arms above your head.*
- *Throw inedible objects such as rocks and sticks in the direction of the coyote.*
- *Use noise makers such as whistles, air horns, or pots and pans.*

IF YOU OR YOUR PET HAVE PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH A COYOTE,

call your local Health Department immediately and follow their instructions. You should also report the interaction to local animal control and DGIF.

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO DETER COYOTES FROM AROUND YOUR RESIDENCE,

consider contacting a wildlife control company or a licensed trapper. A list is available here: www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/nuisance/trappers/