



Department of Environmental Conservation

Coyote Conflicts

The Eastern coyote is firmly established in New York. They live in New York as an integral part of our ecosystems. People and coyotes can usually coexist if the natural fear of people that coyotes have is maintained. Pets and young children are typically most at risk.

Recommendations

Below are steps you should take to reduce and prevent coyote problems from occurring. For additional information see our wildlife damage control page.

- **Do not feed coyotes and discourage others from doing so** (also see "Feeding Wildlife: a wrong choice").
- **Unintentional food sources attract coyotes and other wildlife and increase risks to people and pets.** To reduce risks:
 - Do not feed pets outside.
 - Make any garbage inaccessible to coyotes and other animals.
 - Eliminate availability of bird seed. Concentrations of birds and rodents that come to feeders can attract coyotes. If you see a coyote near your birdfeeder, clean up waste seed and spillage to remove the attractant.
- **Do not allow coyotes to approach people or pets.**
- Teach children to appreciate coyotes from a distance.
- If you see a coyote, **be aggressive** in your behavior - stand tall and hold arms out to look large. If a coyote lingers for too long, then make loud noises, wave your arms, throw sticks and stones.
- Do not allow pets to run free. Supervise all outdoor pets to keep them safe from coyotes and other wildlife, especially at sunset and at night.
- Regulated hunting and trapping increases the "fear" coyotes have towards people.
- Fencing your yard may deter coyotes. The fence should be tight to the ground, preferably extending six inches below ground level, and taller than 4 feet.
- Remove brush and tall grass from around your property to reduce protective cover for coyotes. Coyotes are typically secretive and like areas where they can hide. See "Tips to Eliminate Wildlife Conflicts" for more information.
- Contact your local police department and NYSDEC regional office for assistance if you notice that coyotes are exhibiting "bold" behaviors and have little or no fear of people.
- Ask your neighbors to follow these same steps.

Coyotes and People

Coyotes provide many benefits to New Yorkers through observation, photography, hunting, and trapping; however, not all interactions are positive. While most coyotes avoid interacting with people, some coyotes in suburbia become emboldened and appear to have lost their fear of people. This can result in a dangerous situation. A coyote that does not flee from people should be considered dangerous. Coyotes in residential areas can be attracted to garbage, pet food, and other human-created sources of food. Coyotes can associate people with these food attractants. In addition, in some cases human behavior has changed to be non-threatening to coyotes (running into your home after seeing a coyote is behaving like prey). In short, people may unintentionally attract coyotes with food and people may behave like prey. Add to the mix people intentionally feeding coyotes and the potential for a coyote attack becomes very real.

Children are at greatest risk of being injured by coyotes. If a coyote has been observed repeatedly near an area where children frequent, be watchful for coyotes and do not let a coyote approach anyone. Follow the steps outlined above.

Potential does exist for coyote attacks in New York. However, a little perspective may be in order. On average, 650 people are hospitalized and one person killed by dogs each year in New York State. Nationwide, only a handful of coyote attacks occur yearly. Nevertheless, these conflicts are bad for people, pets, and coyotes.

Coyotes and Pets

Of great concern to many people is the interaction of coyotes with cats or dogs. Do coyotes kill cats? Absolutely, but so do foxes, dogs, bobcats, vehicles, and even great horned owls. Cat owners need to be aware that cats allowed to roam free are at risk from many different factors. To protect your cat, keep it indoors, or allow it outside only under supervision. Coyotes in some areas appear to become "specialists" at catching and killing cats.

Do dog owners need to be concerned about coyotes? The answer is maybe. Conflicts between dogs and coyotes can happen any time of the year, but are more likely in the months of March and April. It is during this time that coyotes are setting up their denning areas for the soon-to-arrive pups. Coyotes become exceptionally territorial around these den sites in an attempt to create a safe place for their young. In general, coyotes view other canines (dogs) as a threat. Essentially it comes down to a territorial dispute between your dog and the coyote. Both believe that your yard is their territory.

Owners of large and medium sized dogs have less to worry about, but should still take precautions. Coyotes, with an average weight of 40 lbs., know they are overmatched by large dogs and will yield part of their territory (your yard) to the dog. A confrontation may occur between a mid-sized dog and a coyote. Such confrontations, however, usually do not involve physical contact between the two animals, but coyotes may challenge or chase mid-sized dogs.

Owners of small dogs have cause for concern. Small dogs are of greatest risk of being harmed or killed by coyotes. Small dogs are at risk when left unattended in backyards at night, and should be supervised by owners. Coyotes have attacked and killed small dogs unattended in backyards. Coyotes may approach small dogs along streets at night near natural areas, even in the presence of dog owners. Be alert of your surroundings and take precautions such as carrying a flashlight or a walking stick to deter coyotes. While rather uncommon, people that have picked up their small dog to protect them from coyotes have been injured (scratched or bitten) by coyotes.

Coyotes and Livestock

Problems with coyotes and livestock do occur in New York. Most problems involve sheep or free ranging chickens and ducks. Most problems can be avoided with proper husbandry techniques. It is much easier to prevent depredation from occurring than it is to stop it once it starts. Contact your Regional DEC Wildlife Office or the USDA APHIS - Wildlife Services, 1930 Route 9, Castleton NY 12033, Phone (518) 477-4837 or visit their web site for more information (see off-site link in right-hand column).

Please see "Nuisance Species" for helpful links for preventing or alleviating conflicts between people and coyotes or other wildlife, or to find a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator (NWCO).