

A Coyote in My Neighborhood or Yard

Please read the information and share with your friends, neighbors and kids....



Village of Alsip have received several calls concerning the activity of coyotes in the area and after contacting the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, they informed us of the following information. Education is the number one factor in dealing with the coyotes and they stressed that in the

event of coyotes being aggressive and are causing a threat to the community to call them as soon as possible.

Coyotes are found throughout Illinois—in rural, suburban and urban areas. So if you see a coyote resting in or crossing a backyard, golf course, park or field—that is normal coyote behavior. It is also common to see coyotes out during the day. As long as they are given their space, coyotes do not typically pose a threat to people or pets.

For more information about coyotes in urban areas, check out the [Urban Coyote Project](#).

Here are some steps to prevent human–coyote conflicts:

- Do not run if a coyote approaches you. Safety procedures for dealing with coyotes are different from those for dealing with an unknown dog. Yell, stand up straight, and wave your arms (the goal is to make yourself appear larger), or throw something at the coyote to make it move away (the goal is to scare it away, not to injure it).
- Teach your kids what to do if they see a coyote. Have them throw their arms up in the air and yell “like a monster” to scare the coyote away.
- Do not leave small pets unattended when they are outside, especially at night. Consider the use of fencing or kennel runs to protect small pets.
- Do not feed coyotes. Property owners should limit the availability of unintentional food sources, such as bird food, pet food, ripe fruit, or trash.
- Comply with local ordinances that require oversight/restraint of pets. Coyotes that are protecting their den or young will vigorously defend the area. Simply walking your dog in another area keeps everyone safe.

- Target the responsible coyote(s) when a pattern of “undesirable” behavior develops. Usually it will be easier to change human and domestic animal use of an area than to capture the coyote(s). Recognize that coyote population reduction (removing some or all of the coyotes in an area) is usually unrealistic and always temporary. Removal of coyotes also requires time, effort, and funding.
- Alert residents of the neighborhood and the local municipality (e.g., police, public safety officer) if, and as soon as, a problem develops with a coyote.
- If removal of a coyote is deemed necessary, hire a [nuisance wildlife control operator](#) who is licensed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Coyote removals approved by the IDNR usually involve the use of cage (live) traps or padded foot-hold traps. These animals are humanely euthanized, not relocated

Behavior & Ecological Role

Coyotes are nocturnal (most active from dusk until dawn), but they are sometimes seen during the day. They communicate with a variety of vocalizations; including barks, yips, and howls. Coyotes live in close proximity to humans throughout North America. Coyotes serve an important ecological role by keeping populations of rabbits, mice, rats, moles, and other animals from growing too large.

Diseases & Public Health

Coyotes in Illinois are not considered to be a public health concern. Coyotes can be carriers of canine distemper, parvovirus, rabies, and mange (*Sarcoptes scabiei*). Domestic dogs, cats, and livestock may be susceptible to these diseases. However, only mange and rabies have public health implications.

Mites that burrow into the skin cause sarcoptic mange. The burrowing of the mites causes severe itching. Sarcoptic mange is contagious to humans and domestic pets (cats and dogs).

Coyotes can be carriers of rabies. This disease is transmittable to humans, pets, and domestic livestock and is fatal if not treated early. If you see a coyote that demonstrates neurological symptoms such as tremors, lack of coordination, paralysis, or convulsions, you should **CONTACT** your local Illinois Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologist.

Habitat & Food

Coyotes occupy a variety of habitats in Illinois. They prefer semi open country, with a mix of grasslands and woodlands. However, they are very adaptable, and it is not uncommon to find coyotes living in suburban or urban areas.

Coyotes in Illinois tend to have large home ranges compared with coyotes in the western states. In central Illinois, researchers documented an adult male with a home range of 13 square miles and a subadult male with a home range of 39 square miles. In Cook County, Illinois, solitary coyotes traveled over 20 square miles, while coyotes living in family groups traveled over 3 square miles.

Coyotes took over the role of largest predator in Illinois after wolves and cougars were eliminated from the state during the 1860s. Coyotes hunt mice and voles, rabbits, fawns, and other prey, but they supplement their diet with insects, plants, and fruits and berries when these items are seasonally available. Besides being good hunters, coyotes are opportunistic feeders and will occasionally eat carrion, garbage, and pet food that has been left outside. Coyotes may also kill livestock and poultry. However, there are many feral dogs in Illinois, and often coyotes are blamed for livestock depredation actually caused by feral dogs. It is also commonly thought that urban coyotes frequently prey upon cats and small dogs. A recent study of coyotes in Cook County found that small rodents were the primary food source for urban coyotes. Cat remains were found in less than two percent of the coyote scat studied.

Damage Prevention & Control Measures

Despite common misconceptions, most coyotes do not cause problems. However, individuals do sometimes kill or injure domestic pets, young livestock, or poultry. These incidents can typically be prevented by removing resources that attract coyotes and by using exclusion techniques.

Some coyotes become accustomed to human activity and may approach close to buildings, people, or pets. Cats and small dogs should be observed closely and placed in fenced areas (yards and kennels) when coyotes are known to be present.

Habitat Modification

- Keep garbage stored securely. Coyotes may eat garbage, but they are more attracted to the rodents that feed on garbage.
- Keep bird-feeding areas clean of debris. Even well-maintained feeders can attract rodents. In turn, this may attract coyotes.
- Use squirrel-proof bird feeders. In an urban environment, coyotes naturally feed on mice, voles, rabbits, and woodchucks. When natural prey populations decline, it has been shown that squirrels that visit bird feeders become easy prey for coyotes.
- Feed pets indoors. If pets are fed outside, clean up any leftover food daily.
- Do not leave small pets like rabbits, cats, or small dogs outside unattended, especially at night.

Exclusion

Excluding coyotes from your property is an effective way to prevent possible conflicts. Fencing your property can help keep coyotes out if the fence is properly installed. A fence that is at least four feet tall will keep most coyotes out. Chain link or sturdy welded wire fence may be used. Coyotes can jump several feet and are also very good climbers and diggers. Reinforcing the fence with an electric wire or a roll bar, or installing a taller fence, may be needed to deter an overly ambitious coyote. Since these methods can become expensive, using a dog run with a roof can help protect small dogs and may be less costly to install.

Removal

Preventative measures do not always work. If a coyote is attacking domestic animals or livestock or is aggressive towards people, it may need to be removed. When dealing with coyotes it is safer to use the services of a [nuisance wildlife control operator](#) who has experience trapping coyotes than to trap the animal yourself. These professionals will trap and remove the animal from your property for a fee.

Reproduction & Longevity

Breeding peaks in late February or early March. Gestation is approximately 58 to 65 days, with pups born during late April or May. Litters of two to 19 pups have been recorded, but six to seven pups per litter is average. Coyotes typically produce one litter per year.

Den sites may be underground; under hollow trees, logs, or brush piles; or in abandoned buildings, but most are in vacant fox, badger, or woodchuck burrows that coyotes have taken over. Pups begin playing near the den entrance at three to four weeks of age. Pups are weaned by the time they are two months old and begin to learn how to hunt when they are two to three months old. By late summer or early fall most young coyotes will be on their own, but some will stay with their parents for another year to help raise the next year's litter.

With the extirpation of wolves and cougars from Illinois, the coyote has no remaining natural predators. Forces other than natural predation impact coyote longevity. Urban coyotes typically live less than two years, with vehicle collisions being the most common cause of death. Rural coyotes typically live three to four years. Malnutrition and disease are common mortality factors. Coyotes are susceptible to sarcoptic mange, canine distemper, and parvovirus. The oldest coyote found in a study conducted in central Illinois during 1996 and 1997 was 13 years old.