ABOUT COYOTES

Coyotes and dogs are related. In fact, the coyote looks like a small German shepherd except that its muzzle is more narrow and it carries its bushier tail low. They range from 20-35 pounds and are various shades of black, brown, gray, yellow, rust and tan. While it is not uncommon to see coyotes during the day, they are most active at dawn and dusk and during the night, when their distinctive yapping, howling and barking can be heard. Generally wary of humans, coyotes also can be quite curious and will observe human activity from what they think is a safe distance. Despite habitat changes, this adaptable species continues to thrive.

Coexisting with coyotes in Clark County

For other formats, contact the Clark County ADA Office
Voice (360) 397-2322, **Relay** 711 or (800) 833-6388,
Fax (360) 397-6165, **E-mail** ADA@clark.wa.gov.

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An estimated 50,000 coyotes live in the state of Washington, and coyotes have been sighted in Clark County. No longer just a rural problem, a few coyotes have been seen loping through more urban neighborhoods.

No coyote attacks on people were documented in Washington until 2006. That year in King County, coyotes bit three people, snapped at two others and charged one person. The coyotes' unusually aggressive behavior likely was from being fed by people. Opportunists as hunters or scavengers, coyotes have killed or injured several pets.

People can safely coexist with coyotes and discourage interactions with them by following a few simple guidelines recommended by Clark County Animal Protection and Control. The guidelines are especially important for people who live along or near natural habitat areas or green belts.

Never give coyotes a source of food. Research in national parks suggests coyote attacks are related to loss of their natural fear of humans once they associate people with food. With the expansion of urban areas and other habitat changes, these intelligent animals have learned that pet food, garbage and garden crops can provide the basics for survival. Never feed any wild animal, either directly or indirectly. Don't attract coyotes by putting out food or leaving pet food or water outside.

Make sure outdoor trash bins are secured so coyotes or dogs can't get into them. Use tight-locking trash cans or wrap bungee cords around them so they are not easily opened if knocked over. If you compost, be sure to use enclosed bins and never include animal matter such as meat, bones, fat or fish scraps. These can draw coyotes more quickly than decomposing vegetable matter.

Keep children's play areas in your yard free of groundcover, fruit or birdseed that could attract small birds or mammals, which are a primary food source for coyotes. Keep fruit trees fenced or pick up fallen fruit. Fruit will attract birds, and coyotes will try to catch and eat the birds. Also, keep birdfeeders elevated or hanging above ground. Clean up spilled seed.

If your yard is next to a green space, consider fencing your property to prevent entry by wild animals. Make sure the fencing is securely anchored and does not contain gaps coyotes could squeeze through. Fences should be at least six feet tall and extend at least eight inches into the ground. Consider installing a motion-sensitive lighting system.

Keep pets inside or confined securely in a kennel or covered exercise yard, especially at night. Allow them only controlled access to the outdoors, such as in a fenced yard or on a leash. Confine poultry in sturdy cages or pens at night.

Do not leave small children unattended in your yard or unsupervised in woodland areas where coyotes have been spotted.

Never approach or run from a coyote. Instead, make yourself look big and shout. Teach children to respect all wildlife from a distance.

If a coyote visits your yard, make loud noises, wave your arms, throw rocks or sticks at it, or spray it with a garden hose. Portable air horns, motor vehicle horns, propane cannons, starter pistols or low-powered pellet guns can be effective. Help coyotes retain their natural wariness of humans.

WHO TO CALL FOR HELP

If these tactics fail and you need help with a serious coyote problem, please visit our Web page at www.clark.wa.gov/community-development/wildlife

For more information, read the state's *Living with Wildlife* series at www.wdfw.wa.gov/living