**Living with Urban Coyotes – an Overview**

*Jennifer Hopper*

Coyote are a permanent fixture in Northwest Austin and beyond. Seeing a coyote cross a field, backyard, or a road does not necessarily constitute a problem or dangerous situation, either for humans or domestic animals. Coyotes will be more active and more visible in late- winter/early spring during their breeding season. Most coyotes are harmless; their goal is to eat more natural foods such as mice and rabbits. However, coyotes are opportunistic. If coyotes see easy food – such as open garbage – and aren’t afraid, they may take advantage. That puts them in direct line for a confrontation with pets. Studies have shown that attempts at eliminating all coyotes are not practical, economical or workable. When coyotes are removed others quickly move in. Hunting and trapping can help with aggressive coyote and works to instill and maintain the natural fear coyotes have for humans. However, removing all coyotes from an area is unrealistic and always temporary.

Some tips on living near coyotes:

1. Don’t feed any wild animals such as raccoons or deer, which encourages coyotes as well. Garbage should be stored in secure containers. Do not put meat scraps in compost piles.
2. Remove bird feeders and outside pet food containers. Coyotes will prey upon small mammals that are attracted to birdseed and pet food.
3. Don’t allow pets to run free and keep a watchful eye on them. Walk dogs on a leash, especially at night. Keep cats indoors at all times. Do not let pets out at night unless accompanied by a person. Don’t leave cat or dog food outside.
4. Provide secure shelters for poultry, rabbits, or other outside pets.
5. Clear woodpiles, brush piles and other potential cover for coyotes. Secure garbage in areas where coyotes can’t access it; keep yards clean of refuse and brush.
6. Don’t leave small children outside unattended.
7. Reinforce the coyotes' natural fear of humans by turning on outside lights, making loud noises, throwing rocks and so forth. Be aggressive in your actions. Although the response may not be immediate, eventually the coyotes will flee.
8. Consider fencing your yard. Use a minimum height of 6 feet and bury the bottom at least six inches below ground level. Slant the top of the fence away from the enclosed area to prevent them from getting over the top.
9. Encourage your neighbors to follow the same advice.

*This article is derived from the Kane County Animal Control Department website:* [*http://www.co.kane.il.us/animalcontrol/CoexisitingWCoyotes.pdf*](http://www.co.kane.il.us/animalcontrol/CoexisitingWCoyotes.pdf)