



# Coyote Management Plan



**T**he City of St. Charles and the St. Charles Park District have developed this Coyote Management Plan to maintain public safety as coyotes are known to frequent St. Charles and the surrounding area. Human safety is the top priority of this management plan which outlines tactics for safe coexistence with local coyotes. This plan aligns with strategies adopted by nearby communities.

Source material for this document includes information and research from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Kane County Animal Control, the City of Geneva, the Cook County Urban Coyote Research Project and the Humane Society of the United States.

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*Coyotes are common across the state of Illinois, and generally pose little threat to humans or pets. By following a few simple steps, you can help keep them docile and allow them to coexist peacefully with us.*

## General Coyote Behavior

Coyotes are territorial pack animals that are most active at night or early morning hours, and during hot summer weather. Coyotes generally will avoid humans.

Coyotes usually breed in February and March, producing litters in April and May. The average litter size is 5 to 7 pups. Coyote dens are found in hollowed out tree stumps, under rock outcrops, on a slope, in an existing burrow made by other animals, under brush, or even in open areas.

Both adult males and females within the pack hunt. Coyotes commonly hunt as singles or in pairs and will regularly hunt in the same area if food is readily available.

# Some Frequently Asked Questions about Coyotes



## Why do we have to coexist with coyotes?

Because coyotes are native to Illinois and are common across the entire state, it is important to learn to safely coexist with them. Coyotes also serve an important role in local ecosystems by keeping populations of smaller wild animals and vermin in check. Besides natural areas, they also are living in human-populated areas, near farms, in the suburbs and in cities.

## Why are coyotes coming to suburban cities like St. Charles?

Coyotes thrive in suburban areas because food, water and shelter are abundant. They easily adapt to residential neighborhoods, parks and open spaces and prey on the rabbits, rodents, birds, cats and small dogs that live there. As opportunistic omnivores, they will also help themselves to trash can contents, pet food left outside, and the seeds and fruits of many garden and landscape plants.

## I don't see coyotes all the time. Why is that?

In an effort largely to avoid humans, coyotes mainly are nocturnal. However, seeing a coyote during the day does not indicate a problem or illness. You may notice increased coyote sightings from December through spring as young coyotes leave their parents in search of mates and to establish territories of their own. The winter months also bring them out as they intensify their search for food.

## Why can't the City or Park District hunt or trap the coyotes to remove them?

For the safety of all residents, the City of St. Charles does not allow hunting within city limits according to [Ordinance 9.60.030](#), and firearms and/or traps are not permitted on Park District property. Trapping is equally risky in that there is no guarantee that the only things caught in the traps will be coyotes.

Studies have shown that trapping or hunting programs are largely ineffective. If the conditions that lured the coyotes to an area still exist, hunting or trapping will only temporarily remove them. And it won't be long before other coyotes move in to replace them.

## So how can I be safe from coyotes?

There have been no recorded coyote attacks on humans reported in the Chicagoland area or the state of Illinois. However, coyotes that have become "habituated" to humans may not show fear when encountering humans. Habituation may result from coyotes' exposure to a constant source of food in backyards or neighborhoods (whether intentional or unintentional) along with repeated exposure to humans without negative reinforcement.

One of the first lines of defense in keeping coyotes away is to NEVER intentionally feed coyotes. Also be sure to remove common sources of unintentional feeding:

- Food left out for pets or feral animals
- Bird feeders that attract birds, squirrels and other small coyote prey
- Refuse containers that are not animal-proof or are overflowing

You also can reinforce a fear of humans to discourage coyotes from coming around and establishing their territory in your neighborhood. If a coyote comes too close, discourage this behavior by:

- Yelling at them
- Throwing a rock or stick at them
- Spraying them with a hose or water gun filled with water and vinegar.

These tactics are called “hazing.” The response may not be immediate, but the coyote will eventually become intimidated and retreat. More hazing tips are available from the Humane Society of the United States.

Make your yard less desirable to coyotes. See the [Coyote Safety Checklist](#) at the end of this document.

### **How do I keep my pets safe?**

According to the Cook County Urban Coyote Research Project, most metropolitan areas in the Midwest have reported an increase in the number of coyote attacks on pets.

Coyotes are known to hunt small rodents, such as mice or voles, and small animals like rabbits. But too often coyotes attack pet cats and small dogs. This usually occurs because either food is scarce, the coyote is being territorial, or is protecting a nearby den with pups. The best way to keep your pets safe is to eliminate the risks:

- Never leave your pet by themselves or unattended outside, especially at night
- Always keep your pet on a leash in public areas
- Leave your pet food and water inside to prevent it from attracting coyotes
- Use high fences around your yard



***Coyotes won't stay in an area for long  
if they can't find easy access to food  
and shelter***

# Coyote Safety Checklist—What You Can Do

A critical element of any coyote management plan is educating people about coyote behavior and what they can do to help deter coyotes from frequenting their neighborhoods. It's important to take the appropriate preventative actions before coyotes establish feeding patterns.

Consult this handy checklist to remove conditions that could potentially attract coyotes to your neighborhood:

## 1. Remove Food and Water Sources

- √ NEVER intentionally feed a coyote!
- √ Do not feed feral cats, deer or other wildlife. This attracts coyotes too.
- √ Don't feed pets outdoors; store all pet food securely inside.
- √ Remove bird feeders or clean up fallen seed to reduce the presence of small mammals that coyotes prey on.
- √ Clean up fallen fruit around trees.
- √ Do not include meat or dairy among compost contents.
- √ Clean up food and grease around barbeque grills after each use.
- √ Secure all trash containers with locking lids and place curbside the morning of trash pickup. Periodically clean cans to reduce residual odors.

## 2. Keep Your Pets Safe

- √ Never leave pets unattended outside.
- √ Never allow pets to "play" with coyotes.
- √ Fully enclose outdoor pet kennels.
- √ Walk pets on a leash that is no longer than 6 feet.

## 3. Remove Favorable Den Sites

- √ Trim vegetation to reduce hiding places and potential denning sites.
- √ Restrict access under decks and sheds, around woodpiles, or any other structure that can provide cover or denning sites for coyotes or their prey.

## 4. Other Deterrents

- √ Enclose property with a fence. Ensure that there are no gaps and that the bottom of the fence extends underground 6 inches or is fitted with a mesh apron to hinder coyotes from digging underneath.
- √ Install motion-activated lighting in your yard.

## For More Information About Coyotes:

**The Cook County Urban Coyote Research Project** <http://urbancoyotereseach.com/about-coyotes>

**The Humane Society of the United States** [http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/coyotes/tips/solving-problems-with-coyotes.html?credit=web\\_id250079884](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/coyotes/tips/solving-problems-with-coyotes.html?credit=web_id250079884)

**Kane County Animal Control** <http://www.kanecountypets.com/Coyotes.aspx>

**Illinois Department of Natural Resources** 847.608.3100

## For More Information About This Management Plan:

**City of St. Charles** [www.stcharlesil.gov](http://www.stcharlesil.gov)

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