

Preventing and Resolving Coyote Conflicts

Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources

Bureau of Wildlife, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

The Eastern coyote is firmly established in New York. They live in New York as an integral part of our ecosystem. People and coyotes can usually coexist if the natural fear of people that coyotes have is maintained.

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

- Do not feed coyotes
- If you see a coyote, be aggressive in your behavior - make loud noises, wave your arms, throw sticks and stones.
- Do not allow pets to run free.
- Do not feed pets outside.
- Make any garbage inaccessible to coyotes and other animals.
- Eliminate availability of bird seed. Coyotes are attracted to the concentration of birds and rodents that come to feeders. If you do feed birds, clean up waste seed and spillage.
- Fencing your yard may deter coyotes. The fence should be tight to the ground, preferably extending six inches below ground level.
- Remove brush and tall grass from around your property to reduce protective cover for coyotes
- Teach children to appreciate coyotes from a distance.
- Regulated hunting and trapping increases the "fear" coyotes have towards people.
- Ask your neighbors to follow these same steps.

Coyotes and People

Coyotes provide a great deal of benefits to New Yorkers thru observation, photography, hunting and trapping. However, not all interactions are pleasant. Some coyotes in suburbia have lost their fear of people. This can result in a dangerous situation. A coyote that does not fear people should be considered dangerous. Coyotes in residential areas quickly learn to associate food with people. Suburban coyote food (garbage, pet food, pets) is saturated with human odor. Human behavior has changed to be non-threatening to coyotes (running into your home after seeing a coyote is behaving like prey). In short, food smells like people and people behave like prey. Add to the mix people intentionally feeding coyotes and the potential for a coyote attack becomes very real.

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.

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 occur primarily 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 denning sites in an attempt to create a safe place for their young. Coyotes view other canines (dogs) as a threat to their young. 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 little to worry about. Coyotes, with an average weight of 35 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. The dog and coyote usually come to an understanding on whose territory is whose.

Owners of small dogs have cause for concern. The outcome of a confrontation between a small dog and a coyote will depend a lot upon the behavior of the dog. A coyote knows it is physically superior to a small dog and expects the dog to be submissive. Trouble occurs when a small dog does not submit to a coyote. The coyote will discipline the dog to correct its inappropriate behavior. This discipline will continue until the dog submits or is eventually killed.

Very small dogs, e.g., small poodles, are viewed by coyotes as easy prey and are at risk to be killed year round.

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.