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diverse wildlife resources and habitats through  
aggressive protection and management programs,  
and to provide wildlife resources and safe  
watercraft and off-highway vehicle recreation  
for the enjoyment, appreciation, and use by  
present and future generations.*



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04/04

# Frequently Asked Questions About Living with Urban Coyotes



Neighborhood and Resident  
Issues and Resolutions



Arizona Game and Fish Department

Coyotes are adapted to living in cities, suburbs, rural towns and agricultural areas. When developments are built in their habitat, coyotes are not permanently displaced. Some move on to other areas, but some simply adjust to their new environment. Coyotes can be seen at golf courses, parks, preserves and other open spaces in many neighborhoods—maybe yours!

Here are some frequently asked questions on issues and concerns, including personal safety, about urban coyotes.

## **What about rabies?**

Coyotes can be rabid. However, the Arizona Department of Health Services records show an extremely low occurrence of rabid coyotes in the state.

## **What about children's safety?**

Small children are at risk from coyotes. In Arizona, it is rare for a coyote to bite a human. In Maricopa County, eight coyote bites were reported in the past 10 years, while every year Maricopa County Animal Care and Control reports more than 5,300 domestic dog bites. Children over the age of 5 or 6 generally play in groups and are too large to attract a coyote's interest. Children under 5 years old should be well supervised at all times, especially when near a pool, around streets, with domestic dogs, or where wildlife may be a concern.

## **When are coyotes a risk to people?**

On rare occasions, bold coyotes have bitten humans. Although naturally curious, coyotes are usually timid



animals and normally run away if challenged. Coyotes are a risk to people once they become comfortable around humans, usually as a result of feeding and/or indifference. When this occurs, coyotes lose their natural fear and learn to see humans, their yards, and their pets as food sources and safe havens. It is not normal for coyotes to attack or pursue humans, especially adults; it is a learned response to human indifference. You must aggressively discourage coyotes from feeling comfortable around you and your family by eliminating coyote attractants (food sources) from your yard and encouraging your neighbors to do the same.

## What should I do if a coyote approaches me?

Remember, the human is the dominant player. The most successful method of frightening a coyote away is to appear as large and threatening as possible. Making aggressive gestures toward the animal (moving arms and legs), shouting in a deep voice, throwing rocks, sticks or other objects at the coyote, waving an object (walking stick, handkerchief, etc.), maintaining eye contact and moving toward human activity or populated areas are proven techniques for either making the coyote flee or ending the encounter. Teach children to remain calm, not to shriek or scream (it might sound like a wounded prey item to the coyote) and to move toward adult activity.

## What should I do if the coyote keeps approaching me?

Even if the above methods don't appear to be working, continue and exaggerate them. Do not turn away or run. Keep constant eye contact with the coyote and continue to move toward other people, a building or an area of activity. These techniques will generally frustrate even a bold coyote.

## How can I discourage them from my backyard?

It is crucial to understand the importance of a unified neighborhood effort. If there is a regular coyote food source in one yard on your block, there will be coyotes active throughout the neighborhood. The elimination of any potential food source is essential to keep the coyotes from

becoming dangerously comfortable around humans. High fences (7 ft.+) flush to the ground discourage coyotes from entering yards. It is of equal importance to recognize that an indifferent attitude toward a coyote in your yard has the same effect as feeding it.

If a coyote is in your yard, it is imperative that you make the animal aware that it is not welcome. Coyotes are most likely to be frightened by aggressive gestures, loud noises and large forms. Coyotes have been scared off of properties by people waving sticks or brooms at them, throwing stones or cans at them, clanging pots and pans in their direction, or by having the following homemade coyote deterrents thrown or moved in their direction.

- **Coyote Shaker:** A soft drink can containing 50 washers, pebbles or pennies, wrapped in aluminum foil then sealed with duct tape.
- **The Can Clanger:** Various-sized cans connected to each other with string.

The combination of the light reflecting on the foil and cans, the noise made by the clanging of the cans and the aggressive gesture of shaking/throwing the cans provides several deterrents which affect the coyote's visual (reflective light), aural (sound of metal), and motion (fear of being struck) senses simultaneously, thereby scaring the animal away. Don't stop at your property line. Having a coyote in your neighbor's yard is the same as having one in your own.



## Can coyotes get into fenced yards?

Coyotes can easily get over a 6-foot fence (some individuals even higher). Eliminating the coyote's ability to get a grip on the top of the fence or wall is the best means of prevention. Installing a PVC pipe that is free to spin around a tight wire is a good method to use. See [www.coyoteroller.com](http://www.coyoteroller.com) for an example of this method.

## How can I keep my dog safe?

Dogs most likely to come into conflict with (or be endangered by) coyotes are typically cat size or smaller. To ensure your pet is safe, the best action is to supervise it at all times when it is outside and make sure it is off leash only in enclosed areas. There have been reports of coyotes taking small dogs not only in the vicinity of their owner, but also (rarely) directly off the leash. If you notice a coyote when walking your small dog, let the coyote know you are there and either gather your dog in your arms, or keep it as close to you as possible while using some of the deterrents described previously. Move toward an area of human activity. If your dog is off leash (a bad idea), ensure that it has immediate recall response, not only to eliminate potential contact or conflict with coyotes, but to prevent problems with other dogs and people as well.

## How can I keep my cat safe?

The only way to ensure that your cat is safe from coyotes and other perils is to keep it indoors permanently. Some owners ensure their cat's safety by building outdoor enclosed cat runs. The more time, your cat

spends outdoors the greater the risk it faces, not only from coyotes and other wildlife (owls, hawks, etc.), but also from cars, domestic dogs, and parasites, as well as feline AIDS, leukemia, and other diseases.

## Where can I get more information?

For more information on living with urban wildlife, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has a variety of "Living with Urban Wildlife" brochures and videos available free from each office. Contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department at (602) 942-3000 for the office nearest you, or visit the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at [azgfd.com](http://azgfd.com)

Other Web sites include the Stanley Park Ecology Society at [www.stanleyparkecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca) for urban coyote information, the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management at <http://wildlifedamage.unl.edu> for more comprehensive wildlife damage information, or go to a search engine and type in "urban coyote control" for related sites.

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