



## Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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*Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.*

### Southwest Region

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MyFWC.com

One of the most frequent reports Florida Fish and Wildlife receives is about coyote sighting in urban areas. Coyotes are a native species and a natural part of Florida's landscape as well as an important part of the ecosystem. Coyotes have adapted very well to urban environments, so it is not unusual or alarming to find them in communities such as yours. Coyotes are naturally fearful of humans and generally do not represent a risk to public health or safety, but there are some things residents can do to further limit the chances of an unwanted encounter. We try to be proactive in educating the public about what they should do if they are ever to encounter a coyote as many people are alarmed if they unexpectedly encounter one in their area.

For individuals with [coyote neighbors](#), we provide [technical assistance](#) through phone and email communications. Brochures are available digitally and in print in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Residents with questions or concerns can reach our [regional offices](#) Monday-Friday 8am-5pm at to speak with a wildlife assistance biologist.

Coyotes are generally not a threat to people and are *usually* easily scared off. Killing and removing coyotes from a community can open a space for others to move in. Coyotes are highly organized in their social structure and removing one or two individuals can disrupt that hierarchy and cause more young to be born at a faster rate. Coyotes can also benefit the ecosystem by providing natural, effortless pest and rodent control. To reduce your chances of a negative encounter, we recommend the following:

#### Step 1 – Secure Attractants:

Secure all attractants, also known as human related food sources, (pet food, garbage, bird seed, fallen fruit, etc.) as this is commonly what brings coyotes to the area. Coyotes are true omnivores, and as much as half of their diet is made up of plants and insects. The remainder is mostly small mammals, like rats and mice. This makes them very well adapted to thriving in urban areas where these food sources are abundant. To help keep coyotes at a distance, trash should ideally be closed and kept secure in a garage or shed until the morning of pick up. Fallen fruit and bird seed should be regularly cleaned up, and pets should not be fed outside whenever possible.

If there are feral or stray cats in the community, immediate modification to feeding stations and schedules are needed – set specific time(s) of day, provide time limits, be present during entire feeding session, and remove uneaten food, bowls, and containers immediately rather than leaving it throughout the day or night to be eaten. Keep in mind that feeding coyotes, raccoons, foxes, bears, alligators, pelicans, and sandhill cranes is **illegal** per Rule 68A-4.001 General Prohibitions. If you believe someone is feeding coyotes, you may report it to the Wildlife Alert Hotline (888) 404-3922.

#### Domestic animals (pets and livestock):

Although coyotes rarely pose a risk to humans, they can cause conflict with our pets. Pets are best protected when they are accompanied by their owner even in a fenced yard, kept inside, and walked on short (6 foot) leashes. Coyotes are naturally fearful of humans, so your presence is the best deterrent.

Outdoor cats are particularly vulnerable to coyotes. Although fencing and yard deterrents can help mitigate the risk somewhat, any time a cat is left outside there is some level of risk.

#### Step 2 - Hazing:

Reinforce the coyotes' fear of humans with sudden loud noises and threatening gestures:

- yelling, deploying air horns, pots and pans, aluminum cans filled with nuts, stones, or coins
- squirt with a water hose, slingshot, paintball gun, to deter coyotes
- installing motion activated deterrents in your yard: alarms such as a Critter Gitter or sprinkler styles like Water Scarecrows work well

Repeated exposure to humans in urban and suburban areas can cause coyotes to become indifferent to human activity and coyotes can become quite complacent around people over time when they are not actively encouraged to leave through hazing. When you haze any animal, you should do so until the animal leaves the area completely. Do not stop if it simply moves a short distance away, as this will teach the coyote that it only needs to stay slightly further back. Instead, continue hazing until the coyote is out of sight or is moving away without pausing or looking back.

Please see the video “How to Haze Coyotes” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlOU4Aj5mww>) for a demonstration of coyote hazing at work.

Remember, coyotes do not necessarily generalize their fear of humans to include homes or buildings. Even a coyote that responds readily to hazing or actively avoids humans will come very near a home **if there is a reason to**. It is important to keep trash and other attractants away from the home itself, otherwise you are inviting the wildlife to get too close for comfort.

#### **Legal options:**

Removal options are available *if* the coyote(s) exhibits nuisance behaviors as defined in our nuisance rules. Presence is not an indicator that the coyote is a nuisance, and non-lethal options as listed above are recommended before exploring lethal or trapping options. The nuisance rule defines nuisance behavior as:

- causes (or is about to cause) property damage,
- presents a threat to public safety, or
- causes an annoyance within, under or upon a building.

If an individual coyote or coyotes exhibit nuisance behavior, they can be:

- trapped and released on the same property
- trapped and relocated:
  1. Within the county of capture and a minimum of 40 contiguous acres, and
  2. The releaser has written permission from the owner of the release site, and
  3. The transportation of the wildlife does not violate any rabies alert or area quarantine issued by a county health department or county animal service
- lethally removed if a firearm discharge is allowed in your community. Check with your local law enforcement for information about firearm ordinances in your area.

Keep in mind coyotes are difficult to trap with multiple coyotes adding to that difficulty. Following through on securing attractants and hazing are necessary if removal efforts fail and/or new coyotes fill in the void left by the removed coyotes.

For residents who have questions or concerns, please contact your regional office at 863-648-3200 and ask to speak with a wildlife assistance biologist. We are more than happy to help.