

Coyotes in Residential Areas – things you need to know.

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1. Should adults be afraid for their safety from coyotes?

No. Coyotes are not large animals. They average 25-35 lbs, smaller than most dogs. Coyotes are also timid animals and will rarely approach a person.

2. Have coyotes ever attacked people?

Coyote attacks (bites) on people are exceedingly rare, but some attacks have occurred, primarily on small children that were left unattended in areas where coyotes had been observed and demonstrated a lack of fear of people.

A study by Dr. Robert Timm (Univ. of California) reported that coyotes bit 89 people during a 15-year period (1988-2003), mostly in California. There was one reported death (3-yr old girl, 1981, CA). Most of the coyotes that bit people (including those involved in the fatal attack) were believed to have been regularly fed by people.

3. Dog attacks on people are much more common and typically more serious.

Whereas coyote attacks on people are exceedingly rare, dog attacks are common. Each year, domestic dogs are responsible for:

- >4.7 million attacks in USA each year
- ~800,000 bites require medical attention
- ~368,000 bites send people to emergency care
- dog bites are 5th most common cause sending children to emergency care
- 33 fatalities from dog maulings occurred in 2007
- Americans have 1 in 50 chance of being bitten

From: <http://www.dogbitelaw.com/PAGES/statistics.html>.

4. Will coyotes hurt my pets?

Coyotes will kill and eat small dogs and cats given the opportunity. To a coyote, your small pet is simply a potential meal.

5. How can I tell if coyotes are losing fear or may present a risk to my pet or children?

Attack incidents are typically preceded by a sequence of increasingly bold behaviors:

- Sightings of coyotes in neighborhoods at night
- Nighttime coyote attacks on pets
- Sightings of coyotes in morning and evening
- Attacks on pets during daylight hours
- Attacks on pets on leashes and chasing of joggers and bicyclists
- Mid-day sightings of coyotes in and around children's play areas.

Coyotes that display bold and aggressive behaviors may present a threat to pets and small children and should probably be removed by a professional capture specialist.

6. What should I do to protect my cat and/or small dog?

Keep cats indoors. There are many ecological reasons why cats should not be allowed to roam freely out-of-doors, regardless of traditional attitudes (www.abcbirds.org/cats). Risk of being killed simply adds to the list of reasons for keeping cats indoors.

Most coyote attacks on pets occur at night, and also in the evening and early morning hours. During these times especially, don't walk your dog in areas where vegetation presents ambush cover for a coyote, and keep your dog close if you use an extendable leash.

If you see a coyote while walking your pet, lift your pet off the ground. Carry a stick or golf club if coyotes are known to be in the area. Be aggressive toward the coyote, shout, wave your arms, and put the stick to use if needed. Coyotes are small and will flee.

7. What if a coyote approaches my child?

Lift small children off the ground. Be aggressive toward the coyote. Report the incident to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Hiring a wildlife capture specialist to remove the problem coyote may be advisable.

8. Can coyotes carry rabies?

Yes. All mammals can be infected by rabies and animals that do not show fear should not be approached because they are either sick or they are not afraid.

9. What attracts coyotes to my neighborhood?

Food. Coyotes will be attracted to garbage, pet food left outdoors, feral cat colonies, or may simply live in your neighborhood. They are highly adaptable, smart, and will eat a diverse diet. Never feed coyotes, seal garbage cans and eliminate other potential sources of food and coyotes will likely not be a problem.

10. Can we remove all coyotes from an area, and what happens to coyotes that are caught?

You cannot remove all the coyotes from an area, at least not permanently. New coyotes will disperse into the vacancy.

Coyotes that are captured in Florida are killed. By law, they cannot be released once they are captured.

Final thoughts ---

Florida is blessed with diverse wildlife. The coyote is a relatively new addition to Florida's fauna due to a range expansion that has encompassed all of North America, and the coyote is here to stay. Coyotes live in every part of the country, including all major urban areas. People have learned to live with coyotes everywhere, and we can learn to live with them in Florida too.

The presence of a coyote, therefore, is probably not a concern. However, the presence of a coyote that has been fed by people or that has lost its fear of people may become a problem. In these cases, removal may be advised with the assistance from a wildlife capture specialist.

A list of licensed Nuisance Wildlife Trappers (by county) is available on the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission website: <http://myfwc.com/trappers/>.

Additional resources available online <http://EDIS.IFAS.UFL.EDU>

The Coyote (*Canis latrans*) : Florida's Newest Predator

S.F. Coates, M.B. Main, J.J. Mullahey, J.M. Schaefer, G.W. Tanner, M.E. Sunquist, and M.D. Fanning

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW127>

Coyotes expand their range into south Florida

Martin B. Main, Stephen F. Coates, and Ginger M. Allen

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW146>

Coyote - Quick Reference Sheet

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW088>

Florida's Large Carnivores

Martin B. Main, Ginger Allen, and Melvin E. Sunquist

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW201>

Did I see a panther?

Larry W. Richardson, and Martin B. Main

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW144>

Rancher Perceptions of the Coyote in Florida

Martin B. Main, Michael D. Fanning, J. Jeffrey Mullahey, Daniel H. Thornton, and Stephen Coates

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW143>

Interpreting the Physical evidence of predation on Domestic Livestock

Martin B. Main

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW135>

Visual Guide to Interpreting Physical Evidence of Coyote Predation on Domestic Livestock

Martin B. Main

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/UW171>

Nuisance Wildlife Trappers - <http://myfwc.com/trappers/>