



Living with Coyotes

Preventing Conflicts With Coyotes

Coyotes are currently well established throughout the state from the Berkshires to Cape Cod. They thrive in suburban and urban areas close to people. Coyotes eat many different foods, including small animals, fruits, vegetables, garbage, and pet food. Remember everything a coyote does is related to a potential meal. Here are a few suggestions to make your property less attractive to coyotes.

- **Don't let coyotes intimidate you!** Don't hesitate to scare or threaten coyotes with loud noises and bright lights. Don't hesitate to pick up small objects, such as a tennis ball, and throw them at the coyote. If a water hose is close at hand, spray the coyote with water in the face. Let the coyote know it is unwelcome in your area.
- **Secure your garbage!** Coyotes will raid open trash materials and compost piles. Secure your garbage in tough plastic containers with tight fitting lids and keep in secure buildings when possible. Take out trash the morning pick up is scheduled, not the previous night. Keep compost piles in containers designed to contain but vent the material.
- **Don't feed or try to pet coyotes!** Keep wild things wild! Feeding, whether direct or indirect, can cause coyotes to act tame and over time may lead to bold behavior. Coyotes that rely on natural food items remain wild and wary of humans.
- **Keep your pets safe!** Although free roaming pets are more likely to be killed by automobiles than by wild animals, coyotes do view cats and small dogs as potential food and larger dogs as competition. For the safety of your pets, keep them restrained at all times.
- **Feed pets indoors!** Outdoor feeding attracts many wild animals to your door!
- **Keep bird feeding areas clean!** Use feeders designed to keep seed off the ground as the seed attracts many small mammals that coyotes prey upon. Remove feeders if coyotes are regularly seen around your yard.
- **Close off crawl spaces under porches and sheds!** Coyotes use such areas for resting and raising young.
- **Cut back brushy edges in your yard!** These areas provide cover for coyotes and their prey.

- **Educate your neighbors!** Pass this information along since your efforts will be futile if neighbors are providing food or shelter for coyotes.
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Resolving Conflicts with Coyotes

There are 3 main options for resolving a conflict with coyote. These options are tolerance, fencing and good husbandry practices, and lethal removal.

1. **Tolerance** - Most conflicts with coyotes can be resolved by implementing one of the preventative steps mentioned earlier. The long-term solution is for the public to alter their behavior and be aware of their environment, whether they live in a rural, suburban, or urban setting. By adopting these recommendations, there may be a decrease in the frequency of seeing coyotes in the area.

Coyotes, as well as other wildlife, are adapting to the urban-suburban environments and are opportunistic in finding foods and resources available in these environments. Implementation of these steps empowers the public to be proactive, rather than reactive, in dealing with wildlife situations in their neighborhoods.

2. **Fencing** - Coyotes can jump over and dig under fences that are improperly built. Coyotes don't leap fences in a single bound but, like domestic dogs, they grip the top with their front paws and kick themselves upward and over with the back legs. Their tendency to climb will depend on the individual animal and its motivation. Coyotes are also excellent diggers, therefore the type of fence you install may require barriers be built into or extending from the ground.

Eliminating the coyote's ability to grip the top of the fence is also recommended. You can do this by installing a PVC pipe that is free to spin around a tight wire. The height of the fence should be a minimum of 6 feet in height and tightly flush with the ground. If you have a lower fence, an outward overhang of fence wire may help prevent coyotes from jumping over.

3. **Removing Coyotes** - If you cannot tolerate a coyote living in your area, the only solution is to have it lethally removed. It is against state law to capture and release coyotes into another area. Often people want to capture problem animals and release them someplace else. However, [moving wildlife is detrimental to both people and wildlife populations and is against the law](#). This law has been in effect for many years, protecting both people and wildlife.

Coyotes are a legally protected furbearer and game animal. Therefore, there are statutory [laws and regulations](#) dictating how and when a coyote can be removed. **A coyote may not be removed simply because of its presence in an area, there must be damage or a threat to human safety by a specific animal.**

As stated earlier, coyotes are naturally afraid of people and their presence alone is not a cause for concern, though depending on human-related sources of food, coyotes can become habituated.

A habituated coyote may exhibit an escalation in bold behavior around people. Behaviors exhibited that indicate the coyote has lost its fear of people are when it:

- 1) does not run off when harassed or chased,
- 2) approaches pets on a leash, and/or
- 3) approaches and follows people. When wildlife exhibits these behaviors, corrective measures can be taken.

If an immediate threat exists to human life and limb, public safety officials including Animal Control Officers (ACOs), police departments, and the [Massachusetts Environmental Police](#), have the authority to respond and dispatch the animal, as stipulated in the [Code of Massachusetts Regulations \(CMR\) 2.14 that pertain to handling problem animals](#). This includes animals exhibiting clear signs of rabies. If possible, MassWildlife should first be contacted to authorize the lethal taking of a coyote.

Coyotes taking pets are not considered an immediate threat to human safety, therefore ACO's and municipal police departments are not authorized to remove these wild animals.

Information excerpted from material provided by the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife