

# **Coyote Management Plan**

**Ventura County Animal Services**

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## Executive Summary

The intent of this plan is to provide guidance for city staff in dealing with coyotes in Ventura County. Guidelines and provisions of this plan do not supersede federal, state and county regulations and policies. Furthermore, the provisions of this plan do not apply to Ventura County residents, businesses or homeowner associations in pursuit of their legal rights in dealing with coyotes.

### Management Strategy

County strategy for managing coyotes is based on balancing respect and protection for wildlife and their habitats without compromising public safety. The main strategy is comprised of a three-pronged approach consisting of public education designed around co-existence with coyotes, enforcement of laws and regulations prohibiting the feeding of wildlife and ensuring public safety by implementing appropriate tiered responses to coyote and human interactions. This plan requires active participation on the part of the entire community including residents, homeowners associations, volunteers and city personnel.

### Education

Education is the key to having residents make appropriate decisions regarding their safety, or managing their property and pets. This involves decreasing attractants, increasing pet safety, reshaping coyote behavior through hazing and creating reasonable expectations of normal coyote behavior.

### Enforcement

The act of feeding wildlife is known to lead to an increase in wildlife activity. Feeding can attract coyotes and their prey to an area leading to an increased likelihood of creating a habituated coyote(s) resulting in increases in coyote and human interactions. California law prohibits feeding wildlife. Ventura County Animal Control Officers will strictly enforce the State law(s) pertaining to this activity.

### Response Plan

A detailed tiered response plan has been developed to provide a mechanism for identifying and classifying different levels of human and coyote interactions. Definitions of coyote encounters is listed in Appendix A and Appendix B provides a chart detailing coyote behavior, behavior classification and recommended responses.

Priority One: A coyote that has been involved in an investigated and documented provoked or unprovoked attack on a human. County staff will notify California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). County staff will work with DFW to locate and eliminate the responsible coyote(s).

Priority Two: A coyote is involved in an incident(s) where there is an attended domestic animal loss. Coyote entering a dwelling or yard where people are present, or acting aggressively towards people. Several level 2 type incidents in the same general area may indicate the presence of a habituated coyote(s). Education and aggressive hazing needed, public awareness of incident(s) and circumstances discussed. If multiple level 2 incidents have occurred in the same vicinity within a short amount of time, lethal removal may be recommended.

Priority Three: A coyote appears to frequently associate with humans or human related food sources, and exhibits little wariness of human presence, including unattended domestic animal loss. Coyote is seen during the day resting or continuously moving through an area frequented by people. Education and aggressive hazing needed, volunteer hazing team created.

Priority four: A coyote is seen or heard in an area. Sighting may be during the day or night. Coyote may be seen moving through the area or seen resting in one place. Education and hazing needed.

The attached comprehensive plan provides the guidelines for implementation.

## **Coyote Management Plan**

### **Background**

The Ventura County Animal Services does not own or have any control of wild animals found within its boundaries, nor is the city responsible for the actions or damage caused by them. These animals are a common and important integral part of our ecosystem, biosphere and the circle of life. Ventura County Animal Services, was originally created to deal with problems arising from stray dogs and to enforce laws pertaining to them. Wildlife to a small degree has been included in the scope of the services that the agency provides as need has arisen due to proximity to natural habitat which has resulted in wild animals being involved in distress situations in which they require rescue.

Ventura County Animal Control Officers do not respond to calls for service for normal coyote behavior, such as sightings. These calls will be recorded and documented. However, they will respond to calls which involve a sick or injured coyote(s) or if there is a public safety issue, such as a coyote(s) threatening people or resting in an area frequented by people, such as a yard, park, playground, school, etc.

### **Difficulties Managing Wildlife**

Although Ventura County places a high value on its wildlife, some species adapted to urban environments have the potential for problems and/or conflicts in specific situations. In addressing problems, the county promotes policies supporting prevention and implementation of remedial measures that do not harm the wildlife or their habitats.

A wildlife problem is defined as any situation that causes a health or safety issue to its residents. In cases where problems with wildlife are associated with human behavior (leaving garbage exposed or intentional wildlife feeding), ordinances and enforcement may be enacted to minimize conflict.

In some cases, particular or traditional management tools are ineffective. For example, relocation of animals is not ecologically sound and is not allowed in California without permission from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). Generally, relocated animals do not survive the transfer. If they do, they rarely stay in the relocation area and tend to disperse to other locations where they may cause problems, be involved in territory disputes or introduce disease. In some instances, the dispersed wildlife, especially coyotes, will go to great lengths to return to its previous territory or adversely affect residents. For these reasons, the DFW rarely allows relocation of wildlife.

As a last resort, lethal control measures, when employed, are controversial and non-selective. If they are used, they must be humane and in compliance with federal and state laws.

It is not economically, ecologically or in other ways efficient to attempt to remove all coyotes from the urban ecosystem. Attempts made by the Local, State and Federal Agencies as well as private organizations over the past century to eradicate coyotes has proven to be ineffective. Moreover, during the past century coyotes have expanded their territories to include every State except Hawaii.

### **What role do coyotes play in the environment?**

Coyotes play an important role in the urban ecosystem. They are predators of geese, eggs, squirrels, mice, rabbits, rats, gophers and other small animals. Rodents make up a majority of their diet.

### **How do humans perceive coyotes?**

People respond to coyotes in various ways. Some observe them with enjoyment, others with indifference and some with fear or concern. Personal experiences with coyotes may influence their perceptions. Experiences range from animal sightings without incident to stalking, killing of pets or, at the extreme, an attack on a person.

Because wild animals conjure up fear, actual sightings and perceptions may become exaggerated or misconstrued (see Appendix A for coyote description encounters). The wide range in perceptions of urban coyotes from Ventura County residents supports the need for strong and consistent educational messages to clarify management techniques.

### **Have coyote numbers increased in Ventura County?**

Without tracking and updated inventories, it is difficult to know if the number of coyotes has increased in an area. What is known is that coyotes can become habituated if they are intentionally or unintentionally fed, which can lead to bolder behavior when coyotes lose their fear of people.

Coyotes - like all predators - will stabilize their populations if they are not constantly exploited. In general, Coyotes regularly roam an area of about 2-5 square miles or whatever it takes to get enough food for the pack members. Normally, each pack is a territorial family group that varies in number from 3 to 10 individuals. A portion of the area the pack inhabits is the pack's territory, which they defend from other coyotes. The number of mature coyotes in the pack is linked to the amount of food resources in the territory. The pack system keeps coyotes from getting too numerous because the packs defend the area they need to survive.

A coyote pack usually has one breeding (or alpha) female. This female produces more pups than are ultimately wanted in the pack. Young coyotes may leave the pack at about 9-11 months of age but dispersal patterns are highly variable. These coyotes become transients. Other types of transients include older individuals that can no longer defend their role as upper level pack members and leave the pack.

Transients move all over in narrow undefended zones that exist between pack territories searching for an open habitat to occupy or group to join. They often die before they succeed (many are hit by cars). It is largely because of these transients, that coyote eradication programs are unsuccessful.

Removing a group of territorial coyotes will create an undefended area into which the transient coyotes will flow. At all times of the year, numbers of transients are immediately available to replenish any voids created by killing the resident coyotes. Further, if either the alpha male or alpha female in a pack is killed, the resulting effect may result in ovulation in other breeding-age females in the pack and an increase in the number of litters as well as the number of pups per litter.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring is a critical component of an effective coyote management plan. This is best accomplished with input from both residents and city officials. Ventura County Animal Services records coyote incidents when reported to department. Coyote incidents can be reported by calling (805) 388-4341.

The purpose of monitoring human-coyote interactions is to document where coyotes are frequently seen and to identify human-coyote conflict hotspots. Gathering specific data on incidents will allow for targeting of educational campaigns and conflict mitigation efforts, as well as the ability to measure success in reducing conflicts over time.

### **Public Education and Outreach**

Education is the key to having residents make appropriate decisions regarding their safety, or managing their property and pets. This involves decreasing attractants, increasing pet safety and creating reasonable expectations of normal coyote behavior.

Learning how to respond to a coyote encounter empowers residents and supports reshaping undesired coyote behavior. The public should understand what normal coyote behavior is when living in close proximity with coyotes. For example, vocalization is normal acceptable behavior and does not indicate aggression. Education and outreach include:

- a) Understanding human safety, pet safety, coyote attractants, deterrents to coyotes on private property, including appropriate fencing, exclusion techniques, “what to do” tips, and information on appropriate hazing techniques.
- b) Developing a common language and awareness of normal versus abnormal behavior when discussing encounters with coyotes (see definitions in Appendix A)

- c) Dissemination of information to residents, businesses and schools through the county's website, media, fliers/handouts, mailers, etc.
- d) Cooperating with non-profit organizations like Project Coyote and agencies like the California Department of Fish and Wildlife that provide public education materials, programs, and expertise.

### **Coyote attractants in urban areas.**

Coyotes are drawn to urban and suburban areas for the following reasons:

1. **Food.** Urban areas provide a bounty of natural food choices for coyotes, who primarily eat rodents such as mice and rats. However, coyotes can be further attracted into suburban neighborhoods by human-associated food such as pet food, unsecured compost or trash, and fallen fruit in yards. Intentional and unintentional feeding can lead coyotes to associate humans with sources of food, which can result in negative interactions among coyotes, people and pets. To reduce food attractants in urban and suburban areas:
  - a. Never hand-feed or otherwise deliberately feed a coyote.
  - b. Avoid feeding pets outside. Remove sources of pet food and water. If feeding pets outside is necessary, remove the bowl and any leftover food promptly.
  - c. Never compost any meat or dairy (unless the compost is fully secured).
  - d. Maintain good housekeeping, such as regularly raking areas around bird feeders, to help discourage coyote activity near residences.
  - e. Remove fallen fruit from the ground.
  - f. Keep trash in high-quality containers with tight-fitting lids. Only place the cans curbside the morning of collection. If you leave out overnight, trash cans are more likely to be tipped over and broken into.
  - g. Bag especially attractive food wastes such as meat scraps or leftover pet food. If it is several days before garbage will be picked up, freeze temporarily or take to a dumpster or other secure storage container.
2. **Water.** Urban areas provide a year-round supply of water in the form of storm water impoundments and channels, artificial lakes, irrigation, pet water dishes, etc., which support both coyotes and their prey.
  - a. In dry conditions, water can be as alluring as food, so remove water bowls set outside for pets and make watering cans unavailable.
3. **Access to shelter.** Parks, greenbelts, open spaces, golf courses, buildings, sheds, decks and crawl spaces, etc., increase the amount and variability of cover for coyotes. They allow coyotes to safely and easily remain close to people, pets, homes and businesses without detection.

- a. In the spring, when coyotes give birth and begin to raise young, they concentrate their activities around dens or burrows in which their young are sheltered. Coyotes may take advantage of available spaces under sheds or decks for use as a den, bringing them into close contact with people and pets.
4. **Unattended Pets.** Pets are a normal part of an urban landscape. Within their territory, coyotes may consider pets as potential prey or potential competitors.
- a. Free-roaming pets, especially cats and sometimes small dogs, may attract coyotes into neighborhoods. The best way to minimize risk to pets is to not leave them outside unattended.
  - b. Cats. Coyotes primarily eat small mammals such as mice and rats, but will also prey on slightly larger mammals such as rabbits and groundhogs. Approximately the same size as a groundhog or rabbit, free-roaming outdoor cats may also be seen as eligible prey items by coyotes. It is important to note that attacks on cats are normal coyote behavior and do not indicate a danger for people. The only way to protect cats from coyotes (and the other dangers of outdoor life such as cars, disease, dogs and other wildlife) is to keep cats indoors (or only let them outside in a secure enclosure or when accompanied by a person and under the control of a leash and harness).
  - c. Feral cats. People who feed feral cats are often concerned that coyotes might prey on the cats. These concerns are well founded, as coyotes can be attracted to the outdoor pet food. Although there is no sure way to protect feral cats from coyotes, the following tips can be helpful:
    - i. Feed cats only during the day and at a set time—and pick up any leftovers immediately.
    - ii. Provide escape routes for cats.
    - iii. Haze coyotes seen on the property (see *Appendix C*). Making them feel uncomfortable will encourage them to stay out of the area.
  - d. Dogs are also vulnerable to coyote confrontations. These incidents generally involve coyotes who are accustomed or habituated to people (usually due to wildlife feeding), or coyotes who are protecting their territory and pups (usually during breeding season).
    - i. Small, unattended dogs may be seen as potential prey for coyotes. It is important to either keep dogs on a leash six feet long or shorter when outdoors or to stay within six feet of them when outside. (Coyotes may view a dog on a leash longer than six feet

as an unattended pet.) Attacks on unattended, small dogs are normal coyote behavior and do not indicate a danger for people.

- ii. Although attacks on larger dogs are rarer, coyotes will sometimes go after a large dog when they feel that their territory is threatened. This generally occurs during the coyote breeding season, which takes place from January through March. During this time, it is especially important not to let dogs outside unattended and to keep them on leashes (six feet long or less) when in public areas.

Other domestic animals kept outside, such as chickens and rabbits, may also be viewed as prey by coyotes. Protect poultry or other outdoor animals from coyotes (and other predators) with protective fencing, by ensuring that they are confined in sturdy cages or pens each evening.

Residents are encouraged to use the Yard Audit Checklist (Appendix D) as a tool to help recognize and remove attractants in their yards and neighborhoods.

While human attacks are very rare, urban landscape development, habituation through intentional and unintentional feeding, pet related incidents and media attention have led some urban residents to fear coyotes. Steps must be taken to address safety concerns and misconceptions and appropriate responses to potential threats to human safety. It's important to keep in mind that coyotes have been in and around Ventura County (and other parts of Southern California), for a very long time.

### **Hazing and Behavioral Change**

Some coyotes have become too comfortable in the close proximity of people. To safely coexist, it's important to modify this behavior and attitude in resident coyote populations. Habituated coyote behavior needs to be reshaped to encourage coyotes to avoid contact with humans and pets.

Hazing – also known as “fear conditioning” - is the process that facilitates this change and is by necessity a community response to negative encounters with coyotes. The more often an individual animal is hazed, the more effective hazing is in changing coyote behavior (see Appendix C for coyote hazing overview).

### **Goals of Hazing**

The goals of hazing are to:

- Reshape coyote behavior to avoid human contact in an urban setting.
- Give residents tools to actively engage in reshaping coyote behavior and to support feeling safe in their parks and neighborhoods.

- Model hazing behavior and share accurate information about coyotes with other residents, friends and family.

### **Hazing Process**

Human behavior can shape animal behavior, in either a negative or positive manner. People living in close proximity to coyotes can remove coyote attractants, identify potentially dangerous situations for their pets and themselves, and respond in a manner designed to change coyote behavior.

Behavioral change and hazing includes the following:

- a) Pet owners need to protect pets. Off-leash and unattended dogs and unattended outside cats attract coyotes (as well as pet food).
- b) Residents need to learn hazing effectiveness and techniques. A hazing program must be instituted and maintained on a regular basis.
- c) Hazing needs to be active for a sustained period of time to achieve the desired change for the highest possible long-term success.
- d) Hazing requires monitoring to assess its effectiveness and to determine if further action or more aggressive hazing is needed.

### **Overview of Hazing**

Hazing is a process whereby a number of individuals encountering a coyote respond in like manner to make a coyote uncomfortable and choose to leave a situation where their presence is unwanted.

Basic hazing consists of standing your ground, never ignoring or turning your back to a coyote(s), yelling and making unpleasant and frightening noises until the animal(s) choose to leave.

More aggressive hazing consists of aggressively throwing projectiles, spraying with a hose or water gun, or creating fear of contact so the animal leaves the situation. For more options see Appendix C on hazing.

Hazing must continue once it begins until the animal leaves, otherwise, the coyote will learn to “wait” until the person gives up. Not following through with hazing will create an animal more resistant to hazing instead of reinforcing the image that “people are scary.”

Hazing should never injure the animal. An injured animal becomes less predictable versus a normal, healthy one who responds in a consistent and predictable manner to hazing.

A common concern with hazing involves potential danger to the hazer. A coyote’s basic nature is very skittish and the nature of the species is what makes this technique successful. A normal, healthy coyote will not escalate a situation with an aggressive

person. Hazing is NOT successful with every species of wild animal because different types of animals have different traits.

### **Enforcement**

The act of feeding wildlife is known to lead to an increase in wildlife activity. Feeding can attract coyotes and their prey to an area leading to an increased likelihood of creating a habituated coyote(s) resulting in increases in coyote and human interactions. California law prohibits feeding wildlife. Ventura County Animal Control Officers will enforce the State law(s) pertaining to this activity.

### **CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS TITLE 14**

#### **§251.1. Harassment of Animals.**

Except as otherwise authorized in these regulations or in the Fish & Game Code, no person shall harass, herd or drive any game or nongame bird or mammal or furbearing mammal. For the purposes of this section, harass is defined as an intentional act which disrupts an animal's normal behavior patterns, which includes, but is not limited to, breeding, feeding or sheltering.

### **Response Plan**

A detailed tiered response plan has been developed to provide a mechanism for identifying and classifying different levels of human and coyote interactions. Definitions of coyote encounters is listed in Appendix A and Appendix B provides a chart detailing coyote behavior, behavior classification and recommended responses.

### **Threat Level Tiered Response**

Priority One: A coyote that has been involved in an investigated and documented provoked or unprovoked attack on a human. County staff will notify California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). County staff will work with DFW to locate and eliminate the responsible coyote(s).

Priority Two: A coyote is involved in an incident(s) where there is an attended domestic animal loss. Coyote entering a dwelling or yard where people are present, or acting aggressively towards people. Several Priority Two type incidents in the same general area may indicate the presence of a habituated coyote(s). Education and aggressive hazing needed, public awareness of incident(s) and circumstances discussed. If multiple Priority Two incidents have occurred in the same vicinity within a short amount of time, lethal removal may be recommended.

Priority Three: A coyote appears to frequently associate with humans or human related food sources, and exhibits little wariness of human presence, including unattended domestic animal loss. Coyote is seen during the day resting or continuously moving through an area frequented by people. Education and aggressive hazing needed, volunteer hazing team created.

Priority Four: A coyote is seen or heard in an area. Sighting may be during the day or night. Coyote may be seen moving through the area or seen resting in one place. Education and hazing needed.

## Appendix A

### Definitions of Encounters with Coyotes

**Active coexistence:** Humans and coyotes exist together. Communities decide on community space, such as open spaces, where coyotes are appropriate and do not haze, feed, or interact with them in these areas. Humans take an active role in keeping coyotes in their community wild by learning about coyote ecology and behavior, removing attractants, taking responsibility for pet safety, and hazing coyotes in neighborhood or community spaces (except for predetermined coyote appropriate areas).

**Attack** – A human is injured or killed by a coyote.

**Provoked** - A human-provoked attack or incident where the human involved encourages the coyote to engage. Examples include dog off-leash in an on-leash area; dog on leash longer than 6' in length, or a human intentionally approaches or feeds the coyote.

**Unprovoked** - An unprovoked attack or incident where the human involved does not encourage the coyote to engage.

#### **Pet Attack**

**Attended animal loss or injury** - When a person is within 6' of the pet and the pet is on leash and is attacked and injured by a coyote.

**Domestic animal loss or injury** - A coyote injures or kills a pet. Also includes "depredation" - predation on domestic pets or livestock. Unattended animal loss or injury is normal behavior for a coyote.

**Suspected Pet Attack:** A Coyote is an opportunistic feeder and may feed on animals, especially cats that were previously killed by cars or other means. The remains may be found and indicate that the animal was attacked by a coyote. In cases where Animal Control Officers respond to these calls, without knowledge of an actual attack, the incident will be recorded as a suspected attack.

**Encounter:** An unexpected, direct meeting between a human and a coyote that is without incident.

#### **Feeding**

**Intentional feeding** - A resident or business actively and intentionally feeds coyotes including intentionally providing food for animals in the coyote food chain.

**Unintentional feeding** - A resident or business is unintentionally providing access to food. Examples such as accessible compost, fallen fruit from trees, left open sheds and doors, pet food left outdoors, among others.

Unintentional feeding – bird feeders: A resident or business with bird feeders that may provide food for coyotes, e.g. birds, bird food, rodents, squirrels. Bird feeders must be kept high enough from the ground so a coyote is unable to reach the feeding animals. The area under the bird feeder must be kept clean and free of residual bird food.

**Hazing**: Training method that employs immediate use of deterrents to move an animal out of an area or discourage an undesirable behavior or activity. Hazing techniques include loud noises, spraying water, bright lights, throwing objects, shouting. Hazing can help maintain a coyote's fear of humans and deter them from neighborhood spaces such as backyards and play spaces. Hazing does not damage animals, humans or property.

**Threat Incident**: A conflict between a human and a coyote where the coyote exhibits the following behavior: approaches a human and growls, bares teeth, or lunges; injures or kills an attended domestic animal. A human is not injured.

**Stalking Incident**: A conflict between a human and a coyote where the coyote exhibits the following behavior: follows a person with or without an attended pet on leash. A human is not injured

**Observation**: The act of noticing or taking note of tracks, scat or vocalizations.

**Sighting**: A visual observation of a coyote(s). A sighting may occur at any time of the day or night.

**Unsecured Trash** - Trash that is accessible to wildlife, e.g. individual garbage cans, bags or uncovered or open dumpsters or trash cans over-flowing or where scattered trash is outside the receptacle.

**Appendix B**  
**Coyote behavior, behavior classification and recommended response**

<b>Coyote Action</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Response</b>
Coyote heard	Observation Priority Four	Provide educational materials and info on normal coyote behavior
Coyote seen moving in area	Sighting Priority Four	Provide education materials and info on normal coyote behavior
Coyote seen resting in area	Sighting Priority Three or Four	If area frequented by people, educate on normal behavior and haze to encourage animal to leave. Look for and eliminate attractants.
Coyote following or approaching a person w/o pet (Stalking)	Encounter Priority Three	Educate on hazing techniques, what to do tips
Coyote following or approaching a person & pet (Stalking)	Sighting Encounter Priority Three	Educate on hazing techniques, what to do tips and pet safety
Coyote entering a yard without pets	Sighting Priority Three	Educate on coyote attractants, yard audit, provide hazing info
Coyote entering a yard with pets	Encounter Priority Three	Educate on coyote attractants, yard audit, hazing info, pet safety
Coyote entering yard and injuring or killing pet w/o people present	Pet Attack Priority Two	Develop hazing team in area, gather info on specific animals involved, report on circumstances, educate on coyote attractants, yard and neighborhood audits, pet safety
Coyote entering yard with people & pets, no injury occurring	Encounter Priority Two	Gather info on specific animals involved, document circumstances, educate on coyote attractants, yard/neighborhood audits, hazing, pet safety
Coyote biting or injuring unattended pet / pet on leash longer than 6'	Pet Attack Priority Two	Gather info on specific animals involved, report circumstances, educate on coyote attractants, yard/ neighborhood audits, hazing, pet safety
Coyote biting or injuring attended pet / pet on leash 6' or less	Pet Attack Priority Two	Gather info on specific animals involved, document circumstances, educate on coyote attractants, yard/ neighborhood audits, hazing, pet safety
Coyote entering interior of dwelling	Encounter Threat Priority Two	Gather info on specific animals involved, report circumstances, educate on coyote attractants, yard/ neighborhood audits, Aggressive hazing, pet safety.
Coyote aggressive, showing teeth, back fur raised, lunging, nipping w/o contact	Threat Priority Two	Gather info on specific animals involved, report circumstances, educate on coyote attractants, yard/ neighborhood audits, Aggressive hazing, pet safety.
Coyote biting or injuring person	Attack Priority One	Identify and gather information on specific animal involved, report circumstances, educate on coyote attractants, yard/ neighborhood audits, hazing, and pet safety. City staff will inform the California Department of Fish and Game. Lethal removal recommended.

## Appendix C

### Hazing Program and Training Plan

*Coexistence is not a passive undertaking. Ventura County's guiding principles are to coexist with wildlife.*

#### **Hazing and Behavioral Change**

Some urban coyotes have become comfortable in close proximity to people. To safely coexist, it's important to modify this behavior and attitude in resident coyote populations. Urban coyote behavior needs to be reshaped to encourage coyotes to avoid contact with humans and pets

Hazing is the process that facilitates this change and is by necessity a community response to encounters with coyotes. The more often an individual animal is hazed, the more effective hazing is in changing coyote behavior.

Hazing employs immediate use of deterrents to move an animal out of an area or discourage undesirable behavior or activity. Deterrents include loud noises, spraying water, bright lights, throwing objects, shouting. Hazing can help maintain a coyote's fear of humans and discourage them from neighborhoods such as backyards and play areas. Hazing does not harm or damage animals, humans or property. Behavioral change also involves human activities such as how to identify and remove attractants and how to responsibly protect pets.

#### **Foundation of Hazing**

- a) It is not economically, ecologically or in other ways efficient to try and remove coyotes from the urban ecosystem.
- b) Hazing is one piece of a long-term plan in creating safe and acceptable living situations, increase understanding and reduce conflict between coyotes and people.

#### **Goals of Hazing**

- 1) To reshape coyote behavior to avoid human contact in an urban setting. Human behavior can shape animal behavior, in either a negative or positive manner. People living in close proximity to coyotes can remove coyote attractants, identify potentially dangerous situations for their pets and themselves, and respond in a manner designed to change coyote behavior.

- 2) To provide residents information and tools to actively engage in reshaping coyote behavior and to support feeling safe in their parks and neighborhoods. This can be accomplished by teaching residents hazing techniques. The latter will be initiated by community volunteers.
- 3) To model hazing behavior and share accurate information about coyotes among other residents, friends and family.
- 4) Monitor hazing by volunteers to assess its effectiveness and determine if further action or more aggressive hazing is needed.
- 5) Develop long-term community based hazing programs by volunteers.

### **General Considerations**

1. Levels of hazing need to be appropriately relevant to coyote activity.
  - a) Coyotes live in open spaces and the best practice is to leave them alone and educate the public on personal safety.
  - b) Coyotes are often out late at night when few people are present. This is normal acceptable behavior. Hazing may not be necessary.
  - c) Exceptions: In early stages of hazing, programs should still engage animal. Coyotes that associate danger in the presence of people under all circumstances will be reinforced to avoid contact.
2. Hazing must be more exaggerated, aggressive and consistent when first beginning a program of hazing. As coyotes “learn” appropriate responses to hazing, it will take less effort from hazers. Early in the process, it is extremely common for coyotes not to respond to hazing techniques. Without a history of hazing, they do not have the relevant context to respond in the desired outcome (to leave).
3. Techniques and tools can be used in the same manner for one or multiple animals. Usually there is a dominant animal in a group who will respond - others will follow its lead. DO NOT ignore, turn your back or avoid hazing because there are multiple animals instead of a single individual.
4. The more often an individual coyote is hazed by a variety of tools and techniques and a variety of people, the more effective hazing will be in changing that animal’s future behavior.
5. Hazing must be directly associated with the person involved in the hazing actions. The coyote must be aware of where the potential threat is coming from and identify the person.

6. Coyotes can and do recognize individual people and animals in their territories. They can learn to avoid or harass specific individuals in response to behavior of the person and/or pet.
7. Coyotes can be routine in habit. Identifying their normal habits can help target which habits to change. For example, the coyote patrols the same bike path at the same time in the morning three to five days a week. Hazers should concentrate on that time and place to encourage the animal to adapt its routine to decrease contact with people.
8. Certain levels of hazing must always be maintained so that future generations of coyotes do not learn or return to unacceptable habits related to habituation to people.
9. Human behavior must change to support hazing and continued identification and, if necessary, remove possible attractants.
10. Education about exclusion techniques including how to identify and remove attractants, personal responsibility in pet safety and having reasonable expectations are critical parts of a coyote hazing plan.
11. Coyotes are skittish by nature. Habituated behavior is learned and reinforced by human behavior. Coyotes as a rule DO NOT act aggressively towards aggressive people. The one exception is a sick or injured animal. Engaging a sick or injured animal can result in unpredictable behavior. If this is suspected, people should not engage and remove themselves from the situation, then immediately contact Ventura County Animal Services at 805-388-4341.
12. Individuals involved in hazing need to be trained in explaining hazing to residents who witness the process. They also need to explain the difference between hazing and harassment of wildlife and goals of appropriate behavior for coexistence.

### **Training Program**

Because coexisting with wildlife involves the community, initiating the hazing training programs and hazing activities by volunteers must be supervised by experts. Without this support, the programs ultimately fail. Information should include basic training on background, coyote ecology information, and overview of hazing, examples of techniques. Materials should be provided such as handouts, contact information and resources when questions, comments and concerns come up relating to coyotes.

Volunteers need to learn about coyote behavior and be aware of realistic expectations, understanding normal versus abnormal coyote behavior and having a consistent response to residents' concerns and comments.

### **Public Hazing Training**

Hazing requires by necessity community involvement, understanding, and support. Residents are best equipped to respond consistently and at the most opportune times in their own neighborhoods, parks and open spaces.

1. Locations of trainings offered shall be based on data accumulated from public on coyote activity in specific neighborhoods, parks or open space or proactively when requested by neighborhood community or volunteer groups.
2. Trainings are free to the public.
3. Topics to be covered include but are not limited to:
  - a. basic coyote information
  - b. discussion on why coyotes are in the city
  - c. normal and abnormal coyote behavior
  - d. seasonal behavior changes-breeding season, pups, denning behavior
  - e. reality of dangers towards people vs. danger towards pets
  - f. children and coyotes
  - g. how human behavior influences coyote behavior
  - h. attractants
  - i. tips on deterring animals from entering private property
  - j. appropriate response when encountering a coyote
  - k. what is hazing, goals, how to engage
  - l. appropriate hazing techniques and tools
  - m. pet safety tips
4. Interested individuals/groups and participants can contact Ventura County Animal Services and be placed on a confidential email list. Updates, additional coyote information, electronic flyers and handouts sent out. All information can be and is encouraged to be passed on to others.
5. Participants shall be notified of "hot spots" and asked to haze in the area.
6. Ask for feedback on hazing training and use of hazing techniques.

7. Participants shall email detailed accounts of encounters and hazing (Hazing interaction reports, to volunteer hazers for evaluation of program, progress, successful tools and techniques being used, techniques and tools needed.
  - a. Date, location, time of day, number of coyotes
  - b. Initial coyote behavior, hazing behavior, coyote response
  - c. Effectiveness ratings
  - d. Tools and techniques used
  - e. Additional details/comments

### **Creating a Volunteer Hazing Team**

A group of volunteers trained in coyote hazing techniques can be quite useful to respond to coyote conflicts in public areas (such as parks, playgrounds, etc.). The following guidelines are suggested for managing a volunteer hazing team:

1. Volunteers should be trained in proper coyote hazing techniques (as discussed above).
2. Volunteers should be added to a Community Citizen Volunteer email list, from which they will be notified of “hot spots” and asked to haze in the area.
3. Updates, additional coyote information, electronic flyers and handouts should be sent to members of the Ventura County Animal Services Volunteer group to disseminate to the general public.
4. Volunteers should fill out a Hazing Interaction Report after each hazing activity.

### **Summary of Hazing**

Hazing is a process whereby individuals and volunteers respond in like manner to make a coyote uncomfortable and choose to leave a situation where their presence is unwanted.

Basic hazing consists of standing your ground, never ignoring or turning your back to a coyote(s), yelling and making unpleasant and frightening noises until the animal(s) choose to leave.

More aggressive hazing consists of approaching an animal quickly and aggressively, throwing projectiles, spraying with a hose or water gun, or creating fear of contact so the animal leaves the situation. Note: Many projectiles are not legal including but not limited to slingshots, paintballs, guns and pepper balls.

Hazing must continue once it begins until the animal leaves, otherwise, the coyote will learn to “wait” until the person gives up. The coyote will create an animal more resistance to hazing instead of reinforcing the image that “people are scary”.

Hazing should never injure the animal. An injured animal becomes less predictable versus a normal, healthy one who responds in a consistent and predictable manner to hazing.

Hazing should be conducted in a manner that allows the coyote to return to its normal habitat in a direction that would minimize harm to the animal. Hazing the animal in the direction of other houses and busy streets should be avoided.

Hazing uses a variety of different hazing tools. This is critical as coyotes get used to individual items and sounds.

- Noisemaker: Voice, whistles, air horns, bells, “shaker” cans, pots, pie pans
- Projectiles: sticks, small rocks, cans, tennis balls, rubber balls.
- Deterrents: hoses, spray bottles with vinegar, pepper spray, bear repellent, walking sticks

## Appendix D

### Coyote Yard Audit Checklist (For municipal or homeowner use)

	OK	FIX	Ways to Mitigate
FOOD			NEVER hand-feed or intentionally feed a coyote!
Pet Food			Never feed pets outdoors; store all pet food securely indoors.
Water Sources			Remove water attractants (such as pet water bowls) in dry climates.
Bird Feeders			Remove bird feeders or clean fallen seed to reduce the presence of small mammals that coyotes prefer to eat.
Fallen Fruit			Clean up fallen fruit around trees.
Compost			Do not include meat or dairy among compost contents unless fully enclosed.
BBQ Grills			Clean up food around barbeque grills after each use.
Trash			Secure all trash containers with locking lids and place curbside the morning of trash pickup. Periodically clean cans to reduce residual odors.
LANDSCAPING			Trim vegetation to reduce hiding places and potential denning sites.
Structures/Outbuildings			Restrict access under decks and sheds, around woodpiles, or any other structure that can provide cover or denning sites for coyotes or their prey.
*FENCING			Enclose property with an *8-foot fence (or a 6-foot fence with an additional extension or roller-top) to deter coyotes. Ensure that there are no gaps and that the bottom of the fence extends underground 6 inches or is fitted with a mesh apron to deter coyotes from digging underneath. <b>*Must comply with VC Codes</b>
PETS			Never leave pets unattended outside.
			Never allow pets to “play” with coyotes.
			Fully enclose outdoor pet kennels.
			Walk pets on a leash no longer than 6 feet in length.

We encourage you to take steps to eliminate attractants on your property in order to minimize conflicts with coyotes. We also urge you to share this information with friends and neighbors because minimizing conflicts is most effective when the entire neighborhood works together.