



Town of Parker Coyote Management Plan

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide a management strategy and guidelines for staff responses to conflicts with coyotes. Public safety is the primary concern of the Town, and coyotes and other wildlife will be managed with human safety as a priority. The plan also seeks to identify and achieve a balance between the importance of human safety and the native ecology of the region. There is an environmental benefit to maintaining and encouraging natural wildlife populations that are self regulating and that are beneficial to maintaining and/or developing natural ecosystems. While the Town employs educational outreach tools as the primary program in managing human/coyote conflicts, the Town recognizes that there are situations where immediate control may be necessary.

Strategic Plan

This plan includes five key strategies:

1. Create and implement an education program that is ongoing,
2. Provide information about the rights and responsibilities of private property owners,
3. Track and monitor coyote activity,
4. Identify appropriate hazing methods to reinforce wildlife's natural wariness and,
5. Implement a program of lethal control, only determined to be necessary for public safety. For example, when the interactions between humans and coyotes change from *sightings and encounters* to potentially unsafe *incidents or attacks*. (see definitions below)

The Town is working to continuously develop and implement this plan. Understand that this is not a static plan, but rather one that may be situational and strategic in nature. Additionally, as the plan unfolds and the dynamics of the issue in question change, modifications to the plan may be made.

Definitions

The following definitions will be used in obtaining information from the public to identify specific coyote behaviors. Using these definitions will help to standardize the record keeping and will assist in communicating coyote behaviors, both internally as well as with external agencies such as Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) and Tri-County Health Department.

Categories of coyote activity reported are defined as follows:

Observation – The act of noticing or taking note of tracks, scat or vocalizations in the area without seeing a coyote.

Sighting – A visual observation of one or more coyotes from a distance.

Encounter - An unexpected direct meeting between a human and one or more coyotes without incident. A coyote may be in close proximity to a human but does not create an unsafe situation.

Incident – A conflict between a human and a coyote during which a coyote exhibits behavior creating an unsafe situation. A coyote may show aggression towards a human without any physical contact.

Attack - An aggressive action initiated by the coyote that involves physical contact with a human and/or a human is injured by a coyote.

Provoked attack – For educational purposes, a provoked attack is where the human involved encourages the coyote to engage. Examples include allowing a dog off-leash in an on-leash area; a dog on a leash longer than 6’ in length or a human intentionally approaches a coyote natal den or feeds the coyote.

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

Pet loss or injury - When a coyote injures or kills a pet animal. This definition also includes “depredation,” which is predation on domestic pets or livestock. Depredation is normal behavior in a coyote.

Unattended pet loss or injury - When a coyote injures or kills a pet animal that is unattended by a human. This category would also include pet loss or injury by a coyote of pets that are off-leash/extended leash in open space or left unattended in a yard where coyote habitat is present.

Attended pet loss or injury - When a coyote injures or kills a pet animal that is attended by a human. This category would also include pet loss or injury by a coyote of pets that are restrained on a leash six feet or shorter and are not left unattended in a yard where coyote habitat is present.

Livestock loss or injury - When a coyote injures or kills livestock.

Aggressive coyote behavior - Is defined as a coyote that bares its teeth, growls, lunges or charges at a human(s).

Coexistence – To exist together at the same time. Coexistence is not passive, but active on the human’s part, including actions such as removing specific coyote habitats and employing hazing methods. Coexistence provides a mechanism by which humans obtain and maintain a high level of knowledge and understanding of coyote ecology, behaviors and appropriate responses.

Feeding of coyotes – For educational purposes, the following are definitions of the types and kinds of ways that humans typically feed coyotes.

Intentional feeding - A human is actively and intentionally feeding coyotes. This category includes intentionally providing food for animals that are in the coyote food chain.

Unintentional feeding - A human is unintentionally providing access to food. Examples are inappropriate composting, fruit from fruit trees that is on the ground, pet food/water bowls, barbecue grills, sheds and doors (house) left open, etc.

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

Habitat -- A habitat is a place where a coyote lives and finds food, water and/or shelter.

Hazing – An activity or series of activities, that is conducted in an attempt to change the behaviors of habituated coyotes or to instill healthy fear of people back into the local coyote populations. Hazing is not intended to physically damage the coyote, property or humans.

- Passive Hazing – Passive hazing occurs without the presence of a human and includes methods used to discourage the presence of coyotes on one’s property. This form of hazing may include motion-activated devices such as sprinklers, spot lights or strobe lights, or noisemakers. Other examples include fence rollers, fully enclosed dog runs, and electric fences.
- Active Hazing – Active hazing involves human intervention by both physical presence and action. Examples include yelling, clapping or waving one’s arms to act threatening towards coyotes, as well as the use of devices including noise makers (air horns, whistles, rocks in cans), water from hoses or water guns, or rock/object throwing. Safety must be considered: never corner a coyote or approach their young.
- Aggressive Hazing – Aggressive hazing techniques, e.g. paint balls, pepper balls, slingshots, etc., may be employed on a situational basis and with regard to substantiated cases only. The effort may only be carried out by trained personnel approved by the Chief of Police.

Coyote Education and Awareness

Public education and awareness is a key element of this plan. The Town of Parker and the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) will work together to provide education and information to citizens on how to coexist with coyotes successfully. The Town will obtain educational materials from organizations that are knowledgeable in the areas of coyote ecology and behavior of coyotes and use trained volunteers and staff to facilitate the distribution of these educational materials as needed. It will be the responsibility of the Animal Services Division of the Parker Police Department to organize and implement the education outreach program.

Examples of educational outreach:

1. Educational brochures will be made available in Town facilities.
2. Information will be distributed to neighborhoods in response to reports of human/coyote conflicts.
3. Coyote information will be made available on the Town of Parker Web site.
4. Educational human/wildlife conflict signs will be posted in appropriate parks and open spaces.
5. Educational programs for schools, HOA's and other groups will be available.

Reporting and Tracking

It is imperative that the Town has efficient and consistent reporting of human-coyote interactions. The Animal Services Division will follow up on all reports of conflicts and should complete official case reports on all encounters, incidents, attacks, and pet/livestock losses/attacks. Town staff should offer educational materials to all persons reporting concerns about coyote observations and sightings.

The Animal Services Division should track incidents, attacks, pet-attacks, pet-loss, intentional feeding, unsecured trash, and active den sites that are reported. Occurrence dates, times, and locations will be recorded and a map will be maintained.

Tracking reports will allow Town staff to identify "hot spots" where additional signs, education or habitat investigations might be needed.

Responding to Coyote Conflicts

Observations, Sightings and Encounters

Town staff will refer persons reporting observations, sightings or encounters to the Animal Services Division and offer educational materials emphasizing pet safety, hazing techniques, and habitat modification for the resident or HOA. Animal Services will interview the persons to investigate and log the information in the tracking system. A

case report will be completed if necessary. Additional educational and/or investigatory efforts may be made if tracking of reports reveals a “hot spot” of activity.

Pet injuries or loss

Town staff will refer persons reporting pet injuries or loss to Animal Services and offer educational materials emphasizing pet safety, hazing techniques, and habitat modification suggestions. Animal Services will interview the persons, complete official case reports, and log the information in the tracking system. Animal Services will determine whether the pets in question were attended or unattended at the time of the interaction and if human safety was threatened. Additional educational and/or investigatory efforts may be made if tracking of reports reveals a “hot spot” of activity.

Livestock injuries or loss

Town staff will refer persons reporting livestock injuries or loss to Animal Services and to the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Animal Services will interview the persons, complete official case reports, and log the information in the tracking system. The CDOW will inform persons of their rights to protect livestock under state statute and wildlife regulations. Animal Services will follow up with the livestock owners/keepers to document what actions they have taken.

Incidents and Attacks to Humans

The Parker Police Department will work with a Colorado Division of Wildlife District Wildlife Manager (DWM) to investigate upon report of an incident/attack and make a management decision based on the interest of public safety. The Parker Police Department will complete an official case report. The investigator(s) will determine if an attack would be considered provoked or unprovoked, which may affect the response. The Chief of Police and/or designee will be notified and a decision will be made regarding the possible use of aggressive hazing or lethal control. Town staff will facilitate distribution of educational materials about hazing techniques, reporting intentional feeding, and habitat modification to area residents, homeowners associations and area schools.

Coyote Hazing Education Program

One of the basic issues with urban coyotes is that they have lost their fear of humans. Over the years, coyotes have had more contact with humans because they adapt well to urban living. This has led to more coyote-human interaction and conflicts. One of the solutions to this problem is to reinforce the coyote’s fear of humans by adopting a hazing education program designed to help accomplish this goal. This is a program that encourages implementing harassing actions without the use of weapons or bodily harm to the coyote. Town staff will educate residents on hazing coyotes, including the benefits of hazing and suggested techniques. The following are some of the examples of hazing/adverse conditioning methods that have been found to be effective:

- Passive Hazing – Passive hazing occurs without the presence of a human and includes methods used to discourage the presence of coyotes on one’s property. This form of hazing may include motion-activated devices such as sprinklers, spot lights or strobe lights, or noisemakers. Other examples include fence rollers, fully enclosed dog runs, and electric fences.
- Active Hazing – Active hazing involves human intervention by both physical presence and action. Examples include yelling, clapping or waving one’s arms to act threatening towards coyotes, as well as the use of devices including noise makers (air horns, whistles, rocks in cans), water from hoses or water guns, or rock/object throwing. Safety must be considered: never corner a coyote or approach their young.

Aggressive Hazing

This technique may be carried out by trained personnel of the Parker Police Department, or any agency or individual that has been approved by the Chief of Police or designee. This method may be employed on a situational basis and with regard to substantiated cases only.

Lethal Control

The Town may implement a program of lethal control when the interactions between humans and coyotes escalate to the level of incident or attack. The Parker Police Department shall investigate in conjunction with CDOW to substantiate such reports of incidents/attacks. Lethal control may be utilized when the Town (as approved by Town Council) determines that a coyote poses an immediate danger to humans. Lethal control shall never be the sole response of the Town; education must always play a role to prevent recurrences.

In any event, if a human has been bitten or is otherwise being attacked, or imminent threat of attack on a human by a coyote is occurring, and time will not permit the contact of CDOW, a police officer may act immediately, according to their training, and remove such threat.

Lethal control measures will not be used indiscriminately against the coyote population.

Laws Associated with Coyote Management

Wildlife Commission Regulation 303(A): Prohibits the relocation of coyotes without a permit. The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) generally will not authorize the relocation of coyotes due to risks associated with handling of predators and disease concerns. In addition, studies have shown that relocation is not effective.

Wildlife Commission Regulation 021(C): It is unlawful for persons to use food or any other substance to attract or entice coyotes/foxes into an area where the discharge of firearms is precluded by law.

Wildlife Commission Regulation 021(D): It is unlawful for any person to fail to take remedial action to eliminate any attractant (including trash and pet food) once they have been notified that coyotes/foxes are in the area.

Amendment 14 (passed by voters in 1996): Prohibits the use of leg hold and conibear type traps, snares and poisons for the killing or removal of wildlife. Two of the exemptions to this amendment are agricultural damage by wildlife and issues concerning human health and safety.

Colorado Revised Statue, Section 33-1-105(1)(h): Gives the Wildlife Commission the authority to provide for destruction of any wildlife that poses a threat to public health, safety or welfare.

Colorado Revised Statue, Section 33-1-106: Gives the Wildlife Commission the authority to regulate the circumstances under which wildlife may be taken, and to determine the disposition of usable portions of wildlife.

Colorado Revised Statue, Section 33-6-205: Gives federal, state, county or municipal departments of health the ability to grant an exemption to Amendment 14 to take (by use of leg hold traps, snares, instant kill body-gripping design traps, or poisons) wildlife for purpose of protecting human health and safety.