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## **COYOTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM UPDATE**

### **SUMMARY**

A motion dated May 24, 2016 (Buscaino - Koretz) directed Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) to report back to the Personnel and Animal Welfare (PAW) Committee on or before July 1, 2016 with the following items:

1. A detailed plan on the Department's Coyote Management Program (Program);
2. Resources that are currently deployed to implement that Program;
3. Recommendations for improvements to that Program that will further control the coyote population in the City's residential neighborhoods;
4. Including any ordinance or City policy that will support this effort.

Staff reported back to PAW on June 29, 2016. The following is information regarding the Wildlife Program currently in place along with program improvements and recommendations.

### **WILDLIFE PROGRAM INFORMATION (COYOTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM)**

The Department has "Wildlife Program Information" available to the public on the Department's Website along with informational brochures and contact information focusing on coyote management information.

The Department's program is also enhanced by having an Animal Control Officer (ACO) dedicated to Wildlife concerns. We have found that most agencies do not have a dedicated

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Wildlife Officer. The L.A. Animal Services Wildlife Officer, along with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the National Park Service (NPS) respond to community calls and provide personal service and information to many area residents such as not leaving food outdoors for their pets. This has the effect of inviting the coyotes looking for food into the neighborhoods. Often, trash and food is left available on the ground in community parks and parking lots which then has the same effect.

These are steps the Department takes when a Coyote is reported to be acting aggressively towards people or pets:

1. When the Animal Care Center receives a call for a Coyote acting aggressively towards a person or animal, the call is treated like any other dangerous animal call. It is a priority #2 (out of 19) on our list. An ACO is dispatched immediately. If the attack was on a human, the CDFW is immediately notified along with the Los Angeles Police Department.
2. When the officer arrives, and the incident is over, the information is sent to the Department's ACO assigned to Wildlife for follow-up.
3. Once the ACO assigned to Wildlife receives the information, the call is set up for a follow-up call back to the person reporting the incident for more details about what occurred.
4. An investigation is conducted to determine why the attack took place and recommendations are made to prevent future incidents.
5. The officer logs this activity into our data management system and sets up random patrols to see if that coyote can be found. This would only occur if the coyote was not captured or killed at the time of the attack.
6. In most cases, the CDFW will conduct their own investigation. The Department's Wildlife officer will assist with the investigation as needed. The Department follows State guidelines regarding Wildlife.

When a call comes in to an Animal Care Center for a Coyote sighting only, the person is referred to the Department's Wildlife phone number at 323-225-WILD. The ACO assigned to Wildlife contacts the person to obtain more information and conducts one or more of the following steps:

1. Advises them over the telephone.
2. Sends out printed educational information.
3. Arranges a Community meeting to address wildlife issues and provide education.
4. Directs them to the Department's Web page on "Wildlife".
5. Sets up a meeting and conducts a personal visit and assessment of the residents property.
6. Sets up patrols for that specific area.
7. If a "feeder" of wildlife is observed, the officer issues a Citation which carries a minimum \$100 fine and educates the feeder.
8. If the animal(s) are observed by the officer to be injured or sick, arrangements to trap the coyote are put in place.
9. If the animal needs to be captured due to its injuries or medical condition the Department's Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team (SMART) can and has been deployed to assist with the capture.

The ACO assigned to Wildlife also works closely with CFWD, NPS, Los Angeles Recreation and Park Rangers and the Los Angeles Police Department Block Captains to share information and data that helps with understanding coyote behavior in an urban setting.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS:**

The Department strongly believes that the best approach to responsible coyote management or “control” is ongoing education on how to co-exist with indigenous wildlife. With this in mind, the Department is currently working on the following compliments to our current program:

**PRESS RELEASE -** The Department’s Public Information Officer (PIO) will work with the Wildlife Officer and Information Technology (IT) to produce a monthly press release with current and seasonal wildlife updates and educational information. This information will be available on the Department’s Website.

**WEBSITE INFO -** Management is working with IT to improve the Wildlife Program information formatting and layout to be more user friendly and ultimately interactive. The Department will improve the breakdown of information with tabs that more clearly identify what the information on the webpage is about.

The PIO will work with IT to develop a highly visible button on the main page of the website which will take users directly to the Coyote information tabs.

The Department will work towards a goal of having information available as a searchable “Ask and Learn” interactive web dialogue. Users will be able to ask a question and receive specific information which will have been preprogrammed into the website.

Additional links will be provided to reference an on-line library to various publications and other agency websites. Although there are currently some links that already exist, the Department plans to increase what has already been made available.

**ENFORCEMENT -** Animal Control Officers are empowered to use the Administrative Citation Enforcement program (ACE) to issue citations to persons who feed wildlife within the City. These citations start at \$100 per violation and can increase to \$1,000 per violation per day. These citations are non-curable and the person caught feeding wildlife will receive a bill for each violation. The Department will continue to press its educational campaign along with citing persons who intentionally contribute to some of the reasons why wildlife frequent our neighborhoods in search of food.



The Department would recommend that other City Departments, which include LAPD and Park Rangers, should have the authority to issue ACE citations for feeding violations. The more eyes on the problems and increased awareness would help to limit the opportunity of prospecting violators.

RESOURCES -

The Department collaborated with CDFW and helped introduce CDFW's "Wildlife Watch" program to Los Angeles residents in 2015. The plan is very similar to the style and techniques used in Neighborhood Watch programs nationally. It involves the community to be additional eyes and ears and provides them hands on skills for identifying and addressing wildlife conflicts in their neighborhoods. It provides a direct working relationship with all of the departments involved. The program better prepares residents with realistic expectations and training. It builds community and trust while we all work towards developing a more informed community with regard to wildlife "Do's and Don'ts". This will help to stop attracting wildlife into residential neighborhoods. This is one of the community and agency based support programs designed to education and raise the awareness off local neighborhoods.

The Department is in discussions with the National Wildlife Federation to develop a team effort to provide community volunteer support in neighborhoods with literature, meetings and special events focused around wildlife. National Wildlife Federation is well known for their, "Ranger Rick" publication which shares valuable information about wildlife with the youth of America.

The Department's ACO assigned to Wildlife has been sharing the spotlight with the National Parks Service (NPS) at community meetings addressing public concerns about wildlife and coyotes, in particular. The NPS has a 15 minutes PowerPoint presentation which they bring to community meetings. NPS has an ecologist on staff who is conducting studies on urban wildlife and sharing new information on a regular basis with our Wildlife Officer. Recently, the NPS invited the ACO assigned to Wildlife to attend a special "Stomach Content" study which demonstrated that the urban coyotes they studied had a majority of "man made" processed foods in their systems. The Department's ACO assigned to Wildlife continues to be involved and informed of research and data which he shares with the public. This helps keep the community better informed.

OUTREACH -

The ACO assigned to Wildlife attends community meetings and events on a regular basis. He will also plan special community meetings upon request or when a high level of concern exists in a neighborhood. The Department is planning to schedule regular monthly community meetings rotating through each of our six shelter locations so that the public in all areas of the City has regular opportunities to come meet staff, be informed and allowed to ask specific questions. These meeting dates and locations will be uploaded to the Department's website accordingly.

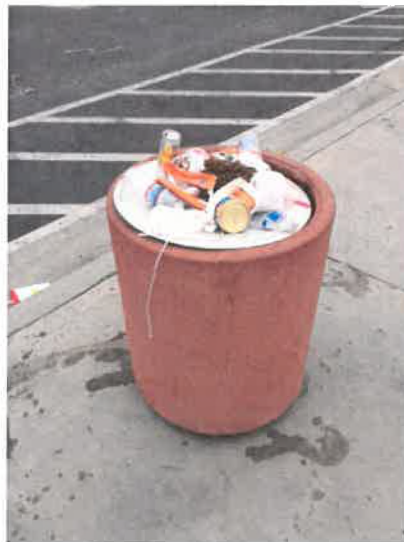
- STAFFING -** The Wildlife program operates without clerical support relying on one Wildlife Officer to answer telephones, respond to emails, mail out educational information (for those without internet access) and enter and collect data. Between 15 and 20 calls are received on the Wildlife Phone line daily, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. With clerical support, the officer would be freed up to respond to more field calls, conduct more community outreach and neighborhood patrols.
- The Department may consider adding a second ACO to the Wildlife program when staffing levels increase to assist with the volume of service calls and meetings. During the 2015-16 budget cycle, the Department was given authorization to hire 32 officers (filling 8 vacancies, 12 new positions and 12 unfunded authorities) and this year we were given the same 32 for 2016-17 with the 12 unfunded from last year being funded. Unfortunately, it has been a long time since the City Personnel has had to fill these positions so no list was available to hire from and other City Departments were also given positions that needed to be filled. Many departments have experienced long delays in hiring as a result. We do very much look forward to bringing these 32 new officers onboard, a few at a time and giving them the training they will need. We began a class of six new recruits on Monday, on June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016. They will complete their training, which includes a module on wildlife, by December of 2016. As we are able to add new officers, the training is adapted to allow new recruits to begin training without delay. We would hope to be able to consider an additional officer in 2017, if all of the vacancies can be filled.
- VOLUNTEERS -** The Department is also exploring the opportunity to have volunteers assist the ACO assigned to Wildlife Officer with receiving inquiries and calls from the public and returning calls and emails. The Department finds that community helping community and playing an active role is the best way to help spread the word about City services and relaying information.
- CITY SUPPORT -** The Department also recommends that the City purchase wildlife proof trash containers for parks and public areas where coyotes frequent. NPS advised the Department that although this would help, the larger concern is food or trash left on the ground and in places like parking lots. Below are sample pictures of what a wildlife proof trash container would look like compared to current public trash containers used in Los Angeles.



Wildlife Proof Trash Container examples used in Yosemite:



Common Public Trash Containers photographed in Los Angeles:





Other recommendations include increased signage warning people not to feed Coyotes:



**Do not feed  
the coyotes**

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The Department does not recommend any changes to City ordinances or policies at this time.

*Brenda F. Barnette*

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