

City of Tega Cay

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 City and coyotes and other wildlife will be managed with human safety as the priority. The plan seeks to achieve a balance between the importance of human safety and the benefits of maintaining natural wildlife populations. While the City will employ educational outreach tools as part of the program to manage human/coyote conflicts, the City recognizes there are situations where immediate control may be necessary.

Strategic Plan

1. Create and implement an ongoing education program.
2. Provide information about the rights and responsibilities of private property owners.
3. Track and monitor coyote activity (*see Reporting and Tracking below*).
4. Implement a program for lethal control, only when it is 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*)

This plan should not be seen as static in nature and as the situation and circumstances change the plan should likewise be reviewed and the necessary modifications made.

Definitions

The following definitions should be used when obtaining information from the public and assist in standardized documentation of coyote behaviors.

Attack- An aggressive action by a coyote that involves physical contact with a person and/or a person is injured by the actions of a coyote (*ex: injured while trying to escape an incident or attack*)

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

Encounter- An unexpected direct meeting between human and coyote that is without incident.

Feeding- For educational purposes the following are definitions of the types and kinds of ways persons typically feed coyotes.

- ***Intentional feeding***- A person is actively and intentionally feeding coyotes. This category also includes intentionally providing food for animals that are in the coyote food chain, an example would be a bird or squirrel feeder.
- ***Unintentional feeding***- A person is unintentionally providing access to food. Examples are inappropriate composting, fruit from fruit trees left on the ground, pet food/water bowls, barbeque grills, sheds and house doors (garage) left open, etc.

Habitat- Is a place where a coyote lives and grows and includes food, water, and shelter.

Hazing- Is 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. It is not intended to physically damage the coyote, property or persons.

- **Passive Hazing-** Occurs without the presence of persons and includes methods used to discourage the presence of coyotes on one's property. This form may include but not be limited to motion activated devices such as sprinklers, spot lights or strobe lights, noisemakers, fence rollers, enclosed dog runs and electric fences.
- **Active Hazing-** Involves personal intervention by both physical presence and action. This may include but not be limited to 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 is the first priority and a coyote should never be cornered, nor should a coyote's young be approached. **

Incident- A conflict between a person and a coyote where a coyote exhibited behavior creating an unsafe situation. A coyote may show aggression towards a person without any physical contact.

Observation- The act of noticing or taking note of tracks, scat, and/or vocalizations without actually seeing a coyote.

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

Unsecured trash- Trash accessible to wildlife. Examples would be garbage cans, bags or dumpsters that are uncovered, open, overflowing or where trash is scattered outside the receptacle.

Descriptions of coyote behavior:

Nuisance-

Habituated- A coyote that appears to frequently associate with humans or human related food sources, and exhibits little wariness of the presence of people.

Depredating- A coyote that is preying on pets or livestock.

Menacing- A coyote that exhibits aggravated abnormal behavior; however such coyote does not display the characteristics of a "dangerous coyote". This may include coyote incidents and/or encounters where a coyote or a group of coyotes could potentially endanger public safety.

Dangerous- A coyote that has attacked a person, exhibits aggressive behavior towards a person and/or poses a significant threat to human safety.

Education and Awareness

Public education and awareness is a key element of this plan. The City of Tega Cay will work to provide education and information to citizens on how to coexist with coyotes successfully. It will be the responsibility of the Tega Cay Police Department, working in conjunction with SC Dept. of Natural Resources, to organize and implement the education outreach program.

Examples of educational outreach may include:

1. Educational brochures/pamphlets/flyers in Welcome Packets for new residents

2. Educational brochures/pamphlets/flyers distributed to TC Connect liaisons to distribute to their neighborhoods
3. Education information on the City of Tega Cay website.

Reporting and Tracking

The City will work to have an efficient and consistent reporting of human-coyote interactions. A City of Tega Cay Police Department Incident report will be completed on all reports of coyote encounters, incidents and attacks (*see definitions*). These reports will be used to map the interactions so that public education efforts can be targeted to specific areas if need be. Tracking will also be maintained on intentional feeding reports, unsecured trash and active den sites.

Educational materials will be offered to all persons reporting concerns about coyote encounters, observations, or sightings.

Hazing

A main issue facing jurisdictions is that urban coyotes lose or have lost their fear of humans. Due to the coyote's nature they have easily adapted to urban living, as evidenced by increased sightings in downtown metropolitan cities around the country, and combined with their lack of fear more coyote/human interactions and conflicts have arisen. One solution to this problem is to reinforce the coyote's fear of humans through the utilization of hazing techniques (*see definitions*). Information on hazing coyotes and suggested techniques will be provided in the educational information distributed and placed on the City of Tega Cay website.

Lethal Control Program

The City may, at the sole discretion of City Council, implement a program of lethal control when the interactions between persons and coyotes escalate to the level of incident or attack. The Tega Cay Police Department will investigate to substantiate such reports of incidents/attacks. Lethal control may be utilized when the City determines that a coyote(s) pose an immediate danger to persons. The City recognizes it may be difficult to identify the specific coyote that has become problematic and will take reasonable measures to direct lethal control measures toward the offending coyote.

If a person is being attacked or there is an imminent threat of attack on a person by a coyote a police officer may act immediately to ensure public safety and remove the threat.

Simultaneous to implementation of lethal control and upon conclusion of lethal control measures a comprehensive awareness and education program will be undertaken by the Tega Cay Police Department in the affected area.

Relocation Program

The City may, at the sole discretion of City Council, implement a program of lawfully relocating the coyotes by using professional trappers in the event encounters (*see definitions*) reach a frequency that the City feels relocation is necessary.

It is important to note that should Council elect to move forward with either of the aforementioned control programs (*lethal control or relocation*) it is unlikely that it will have a continuing effect on the overall coyote population for any length of time. As coyotes begin to feel pressure on their population in a given area, they will go from having five to six pups to as many as 12 to 16 pups. Studies have shown in some areas where the population was reduced by 70%, but by the very next summer the population was back at its original numbers.