

# Living with coyotes

## Co-existing with coyotes

Wild animals have the same basic needs as humans – food, water and shelter. Sometimes, we come into conflict when animals are trying to meet their basic needs. Often, conflicts can be prevented if we're willing to make small changes to how we think and act.

- Never feed coyotes
- Store garbage, compost and pet food so that coyotes cannot access it
- Remove any food attractants, including birdseed and fruit
- Be especially aware of your pets during the denning season (March-June) and the period when pups leave the den (September-October) - these are the highest risk times for conflict
- Chase coyotes away (e.g. yell, wave a large stick, throw something, spray with a hose) if they come to your back fence or into your yard, and do not stop until the coyote leaves the area
- Take responsibility to educate yourself and neighbours about living with coyotes



## Coyote facts

Coyotes are intelligent, adaptable and curious. While they are generally shy and avoid humans, they can become habituated to sounds and noises such as cars and daily human activity. In urban areas, this is why it is not unusual to see coyotes out during the day. Additionally, food sources in the urban area (mice, rats, garbage) are readily available, which also attracts them.

## Where do coyotes live?

The park-like and naturalized areas of Oakville provide excellent habitat. Coyotes can travel great distances via ravines, hydro corridors, and highways. Their den sites tend to be near stream banks or ravines and are difficult to locate as they attempt to avoid detection.

When coyote pups are old enough to hunt, they will accompany their parents on their hunting excursions, covering vast areas daily. This family unit would constitute the small packs that can sometimes be seen.

## What do coyotes eat?

A coyote's natural diet is small rodents such as mice, as well as rabbits and groundhogs. They also eat birds, eggs, snakes, turtles, fish, fruit, plants and roadkill.

Since they are opportunistic, they have added new food groups to their urban diet. This includes garbage that is carelessly stored outdoors. Often, the garbage attracts rodents, causing an overpopulation of mice and rats, which then attracts coyotes.

## Are coyotes dangerous?

Like anything in the wild, coyotes should be respected, however, the chance of a negative encounter is extremely low.

Research that examined ten years of reports indicated that an average of 2.4 people per year were scratched or bitten by coyotes in Canada. The following statistics are provided for comparison of risk of coyote attack relative to other daily risks in Canada (Statistics Canada 2009):

- Over 460,000 dog bites per year
- 200 people per year struck by lightning

## What can I do to keep my family/pets safe?

Confrontations with coyotes are extremely rare, however common sense dictates that you never leave children unattended, and it is important to teach children about animal safety. Educational workshops are available to schools and to date over 15,000 students have attended. Contact the town or OakvilleGreen at [oakvillegreen.com](http://oakvillegreen.com) to learn more.

## Did you know...

- According to Halton Public Health there has been just one reported incident of a coyote biting/scratching in Halton. The 2012 incident resulted in a minor injury. However, every year there are over 500 incidents involving cats and dogs, many with serious consequences.
- Coyotes play a crucial role in controlling the population of rodents as they are 80 per cent of their diet, making them nature's natural rodent control.
- Coyotes are only fertile for about two - four weeks in mid-winter (both male and female).

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While coyotes do not generally pose a risk to humans, small pets may be vulnerable. A coyote's diet consists largely of small mammals so cats and small dogs may simply look like a meal to them.



*Signs are posted by the town in areas where coyotes may be present.*

To prevent conflicts, keep dogs on a leash when outdoors and don't let cats roam outdoors. Oakville's Animal Control By-law (2010-157) requires pet owners to keep their animals on a leash, except in designated areas (off-leash parks). This also applies to cats, which are not permitted to roam at large.

Never feed a coyote. Feeding causes coyotes to lose their fear of people

and become more aggressive when looking for handouts. The town has by-laws prohibiting feeding of coyotes on both private and public property, including the potential for fines. Feeding wildlife poses significant problems for both people and animals.

## What if I encounter a coyote?

Just seeing a coyote in the neighbourhood is no cause for concern. They are a normal part of the ecosystem.

- Do not turn your back on, or run from, a coyote.
- Use whistles and personal alarm devices to frighten an approaching animal. Stand tall, wave your arms and make lots of noise. Do not stop until it leaves the area. This conditions it to stay away from people.
- Do not let dogs chase a coyote. Chasing coyotes could result in injuries to your pet.

## What role do coyotes have in Oakville?

Research has shown that coyotes play a critical role in maintaining ecosystem function. For example, coyotes were found to help maintain breeding and migratory bird populations, because they preyed on smaller carnivores such as feral cats and rodents. In addition, coyotes help regulate a number of other species such as Canada geese.

## Why not trap and relocate coyotes?

Coyotes are highly intelligent and almost impossible to live trap. Furthermore, provincial legislation prohibits relocation of wildlife more than one kilometer from where it was taken, meaning trapped animals must be released in the same area or destroyed. Research has shown that wildlife relocated from urban areas will typically return or become a problem elsewhere,

The use of firearms or leg hold traps and snares to catch coyotes is not always a suitable option in urban environments due to the danger posed to pets and humans, and when coyotes are hunted, they compensate by producing larger litters and expanding their range. If there is suitable habitat, more will return and coyotes now thrive in almost all urban areas of North America.



*Feeding by people is the number one reason coyotes can become problematic.*

## Oakville's coyote management plan

The town has a comprehensive coyote plan in place that includes outreach and education, signage, a coyote reporting system and mapping as well as a risk assessment system to identify and address conflict situations before they occur. Please visit our website at [oakville.ca](http://oakville.ca) to learn more and access the reporting system or contact the *ServiceOakville*:

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