

DOGS AND COYOTES

What you need to know

Coyotes are common in urban areas. Understanding canine behavior and modifying our own behavior is essential to peaceful coexistence with our wild neighbors.

UNDERSTANDING COYOTE BEHAVIOR

- Most interactions with coyotes in urban areas result from the presence of a dog, and/or from intentional or unintentional food availability.
- Coyotes are much like our domestic dogs and share similar behaviors. Curiosity and play are often misinterpreted as being “bold” or aggressive.
- Coyotes are naturally timid, but may view dogs as a threat or as competitors for territories, and for resources. They may defend their mates, their territory, and their pups during breeding season (winter) and pup rearing season (spring & summer). Understandably, they have a young family to protect.
- Coyotes may attempt to escort or divert your dog away from a den site or a food resource. Coyotes do not want to injure themselves, so they may put on a show to get your dog to move along, including a bluff charge or hunching the back, dropping the head and showing teeth. These “threat displays” are intended to scare your dog away without the risk of making physical contact. If the dog doesn’t move away, or engages the coyote, the threat may escalate. **Keep in mind that coyotes in the West weigh only 18-35 pounds!**
- Coyotes’ primary food sources in our cities include rats, gophers, insects, fruit. But human and pet foods (and water) may attract coyotes, so eliminate these attractants to reduce negative encounters.
- Many confrontational behaviors are seasonal, and are often a result of bold dog behavior.

HOW TO COEXIST

- Never let your dog chase or play with a coyote.
- In an area where coyotes have been seen, keep your dog closer to you than usual, and keep them under full control (voice-control or leash) at all times.
- Be aware of what is happening around you and what your dog is doing at all times.
- To protect your small dog, in coyote areas:
 - Avoid using a flexi-leash
 - Avoid walking near bushy areas or “edge zones”
 - Stand or walk with other people, and/or larger dogs
 - Avoid walking small dogs at dawn
- If a coyote gets too close for your comfort, **and you can make and maintain eye contact**, leash your larger dog or pick up your small dog, and haze the coyote (learn how to do this correctly using our *Coyote Hazing Field Guide*). If the coyote doesn’t leave, it’s likely there’s a den, pups, or food source that the coyote is protecting. Don’t run. Leave the area calmly. Change your routine to avoid this challenging area for awhile.
- If a coyote performs a threat display, or two or more coyotes charge your larger dog(s), leash up, leave the area calmly, and report it to your local animal control or humane society.

Note: A coyote has never harmed a person in our city; in contrast, more than 3,000 people are bitten by domestic dogs each year.

Open spaces and urban areas belong to all of us — people, dogs and wildlife. By being responsible dog guardians and minimizing dog interactions with coyotes, we can give each other “breathing room” and peacefully coexist.

PROJECTCOYOTE.ORG

Project Coyote is a national coalition of scientists and educators working together to help communities coexist peacefully with wildlife in urban and rural environments.





DOGS AND COYOTES:

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NORMAL URBAN COYOTE BEHAVIOR

- Active in the daytime and nighttime
- Most active at dusk and dawn
- Watching you and your dog in plain view or from a camouflaged position (like dogs, coyotes are curious)
- Sitting on a hill in plain view
- Relaxing or playing in a field or other grassy area
- Walking and not paying attention to you
- Following you and your dog with curiosity from a comfortable distance
- Hunting gophers in fields and meadows
- “Escorting” your dog away from den/territory, food or pups during pup rearing season (spring & summer)
- Bluff charging your dog in an attempt to move your dog away from pups, during pup rearing season (spring & summer)
- Standing his or her ground unfazed by your attempts to scare him/her away, during pup rearing season (spring & summer)
- Waiting at stop lights to cross busy streets
- Dashing across a trail
- More than one coyote relaxing together or greeting each other
- Hearing coyotes howling and yipping (they are greeting, communicating and defining territories)
- When hazed, trots away, then stops and looks back (keep hazing until the coyote leaves)

WHEN TO TAKE ACTION (HAZE)

- If a coyote approaches to a proximity that you feel is uncomfortable **and you can make and maintain eye contact**, do not turn and run, haze the coyote according to our *Coyote Hazing Field Guide*, available in SF parks or download from ProjectCoyote.org
- When coyote seems interested in the food you are carrying, even if he doesn’t approach, but hangs around appearing to wait for a handout
- Coyote is in your yard, unless you think there could be a den on your property

QUICK COYOTE HAZING TOOLS

- Surprise with a pop-up umbrella or simple noise maker (keep a penny in a shiny soda can and shake!).
- Wave your arms overhead, make direct eye contact and yell, “Go away coyote!” Don’t stop until the coyote leaves.
- Pick up your small dog or put your large dog behind you before you haze so that the coyote focuses on you and your message.
- Download our *Coyote Hazing Field Guide* from ProjectCoyote.org to learn the why, when, where, and how of correcting unusual coyote behavior. Hazing must be done correctly and consistently to be effective.
- Living well with our wild neighbors is a community effort; please share this information widely!



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