

# Town of Sullivan's Island Coyote Management Plan



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## **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 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 Town will employ educational outreach tools as part of the program to manage human/coyote conflicts, the Town 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.
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 observation and sightings to potentially unsafe encounters, 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.

**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.

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

**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.

**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 (example injured while trying to escape an incident or attack)

### **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.

### **General definitions:**

**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.

**Feeding** of coyotes-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.

**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.

**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 or should a coyote's young be approached.\**

## **Education and Awareness**

Public education and awareness is a key element of this plan. The Town of Sullivan's Island will work 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 will distribute these materials as needed. It will be the responsibility of the Animal Control of the Sullivan's Island 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/coyotes conflicts.
3. Coyote information will be available on the Town of Sullivan's Island website.
4. Educational wildlife informational signs will be posted in appropriate parks and open spaces.
5. Educational programs for schools, HOAs and other groups will be available.

## **Reporting and Tracking**

It is imperative the Town has an efficient and consistent reporting of human-coyote interactions. A Sullivan's Island Police Department Incident report will be completed on

all reports of coyote encounters, incidents, attacks and pet loss/attack (see definitions). These reports will be forwarded to the Animal Control for tracking. Coyote observations and sightings will be reported to Animal Control for follow up and tracking. Tracking will also be maintained on intentional feeding reports, unsecured trash and active den sites.

These reports and tracking will allow Animal Control staff to identify “hot spots” where additional signage, education, or habitat investigations might be needed. 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 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). The Animal Control will provide educational information to residents on hazing coyotes and suggested techniques.

### **Lethal Control**

The Town may implement a program of lethal control when the interactions between persons and coyotes escalate to the level of incident or attack. Animal Control will investigate to substantiate such reports of encounters/incidents/attacks. Lethal control may be utilized when the town determines that a coyote(s) pose an immediate danger to persons. The Town 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 Animal Control in the affected area.

**Public Spaces:** The Town is responsible for the decision as to whether to use lethal control for nuisance wildlife in public spaces with public safety in mind.

**Private Property:** Property owners within the Town of Sullivan’s Island may employ lawful methods to control nuisance wildlife on their property.