

Best Practices Guide: **Coyote-Human Interactions**



Human-wildlife conflicts result when the actions of humans or wildlife have an adverse impact upon the other. It is recognized that humans have profoundly impacted wildlife and the environment in many ways, through habitat loss, pollution, introduction and spread of exotic and invasive species, overexploitation, and climate change. The focus of this document is to provide some best practices to support municipalities in their management of conflicts resulting from direct interaction between humans and coyotes.

Coyotes are common throughout southern and central Ontario as well as parts of northern Ontario.

There is often an increase in coyote sightings in late winter. These are generally caused by: better visibility when the leaves are off the trees and snow is on the ground; dispersal of juvenile coyotes travelling across the landscape after leaving their parents' territory; and, potentially hunger if snow is limiting access to food.

Conflicts between coyotes and people and their pets often increase from May to July, when coyotes are caring for pups. Livestock predation issues typically spike during the spring lambing period and the coyote pup rearing period.

The concerns that arise as a result of coyote-human conflict are varied and may include economic impacts on local farming communities (crop damage and livestock predation), the health and safety of humans and pets, people feeding coyotes (intentionally or unintentionally), etc.

Municipalities may develop local strategies to help address wildlife conflict situations to provide clarity and certainty to both municipal officials and residents. Such strategies could identify roles and responsibilities of municipal departments and staff, and residents/property owners in preventing and managing conflict with wildlife.

Development of bylaws, such as regulating residential waste management and wildlife feeding, may be considered to support such strategies.



The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry advises and supports municipalities to prevent and manage conflicts between wildlife and people.

Municipalities are responsible for taking appropriate actions when human-wildlife encounters create ongoing conflict situations on municipal property, which may include direct coyote control.

Municipalities can also take action on private property within their municipality with the permission of the landowner.

Options Available to Municipalities

In many cases, these conflicts can be prevented. However, when prevention fails, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (FWCA) allows municipalities to protect their property by harassing, capturing, or dispatching a variety of wildlife species, including coyotes, or to hire a wildlife control agent, which includes a licensed hunter or trapper, to do so on their behalf. Municipalities may also take action to address human-wildlife conflicts on private property with the permission of the landowner. No approval or authorization is required from the province in these cases. It is important to note that these animal control activities can only be carried out during the open season unless the animal is damaging or about to damage property.

Any situation that impacts public safety should be referred to the local police as they are the authority to deal with these matters. Police can dispatch an animal if they deem it necessary to protect public safety.

Municipalities may hire licensed hunters or trappers to hunt or trap furbearing mammals within their municipal boundaries to help address a specific human-wildlife conflict issue. The municipality determines the terms of any such arrangement, including the species of furbearing mammals, the hunters or trappers involved,

the number of animals, and the locations and time periods that apply. Compensation for hunters and trappers is also the responsibility of the municipality. Municipalities do not require authorization from the ministry to make these arrangements.

Hunters and trappers hired in this way must follow relevant municipal bylaws and all applicable hunting and/or trapping rules and regulations. Conservation Officers may monitor the activities of hunters and trappers at any time, to ensure that they are hunting or trapping in accordance with the regulations.

The ministry provides support to landowners and municipalities dealing with problem coyotes by providing advice and information on:

- How to prevent conflicts with coyotes by making your property uninviting
- What to do if you encounter a coyote
- Actions landowners can take to protect their property
- How to find a licensed trapper
- Actions municipalities can take to address conflict situations on municipal property



Coyote-proofing your Property

People and wild animals live side by side in Ontario. Landowners are responsible for preventing problems with coyotes by limiting attractants and discouraging them from damaging their property. Many of these measures are also helpful in preventing conflicts with other common wildlife species, such as skunks and raccoons.

1. How to limit attractants:

- Properly store and maintain garbage containers to help prevent coyotes from becoming a problem.
- Keep pet food indoors.
- Limit/halt the use of bird feeders
- Put garbage out the morning of a scheduled pickup.
- Use enclosed composting bins rather than exposed piles.
- Pick ripe fruit and seed from trees and remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Protect vegetable gardens with heavy-duty garden fences or place vegetable plants in a greenhouse.

2. Discourage coyotes from entering your property:

- Clear away bushes and dense weeds near your home where coyotes may find cover and small animals.
- Use motion sensor lights.
- Close off spaces under porches, decks and sheds. Coyotes use these areas for denning and raising young.
- If you fence your property, install a two-metre-high fence that extends at least 20 centimetres underground as coyotes may dig under a barrier.



How to prevent conflicts with dogs



While coyotes, by nature, are wary of humans, they are opportunistic feeders and have been known to kill small dogs that have been left unattended.

Small dogs may be seen as prey by coyotes, while larger dogs may be viewed as competition for mates or territory, or a threat to coyote pups and, as a result, maybe be injured in a confrontation.

Coyote diseases and parasites can be a risk to domestic dogs, and in some cases, their owners.

1. Protecting your dog on your property

- Keep dogs inside at night.
- Clean up after your dog — coyotes are attracted to dog feces.
- Spay and neuter your dogs — coyotes are attracted to, and can mate with, domestic dogs that have not been spayed or neutered.
- Keep pet food indoors.
- Do not let your dogs roam from your property.
- Fence your property with a two-metre-high fence that extends at least 20 centimetres underground as coyotes may dig under a barrier.
- Municipal promotion and enforcement of on-leash bylaws increase awareness and responsible dog ownership.

2. Protecting your dog off your property:

- Keep your dog on a leash.
- Carry a flashlight at night to scare off coyotes.
- Do not let your dog chase a coyote as it could result in injury to your dog.





How to protect livestock

- Where possible, bring your livestock into barns or sheds at night
- Use guard animals, such as donkeys, llamas and dogs, and non-lethal deterrents such as fladry during key times of the year (e.g., during lambing)
- Much livestock depredation is attributable to breeding males providing for their mates and pups. Selective culling within breeding territories and/or removal with the use of “wounded prey calls” can be effective at removing breeding males
- Trapping of problem coyotes should be carried out by highly trained trappers because, once educated, coyotes become very difficult to capture, even for experienced trappers
- Removal of non-problem coyotes (e.g., coyotes not predating on livestock), may result in problem coyotes moving into the vacated territory. As such, producers not experiencing conflict with coyotes should discourage hunting and trapping of coyotes on or near their farms
- Provide safe locations for calving areas (e.g., away from wooded areas, near barn or house, well lit, protected with fencing)
- If livestock has been killed by predators, you may be eligible for compensation through the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program

Protecting your property

Ontario’s FWCA sets out actions property owners can take to protect their property from wildlife damage.

You are allowed to harass, capture or kill wildlife that is causing damage, or about to cause damage, to your property (with the exception of some wildlife such as deer, moose, elk and species at risk, which requires authorization from the ministry). You must not cause unnecessary suffering to wildlife or use poison or adhesives. You must follow other relevant rules (e.g., federal firearms rules, municipal bylaws, trapping rules).

If you capture wildlife

If you capture wildlife, but don’t kill it, within 24 hours of capture you must:

- Release wildlife as close as possible within a kilometre from the capture site and in similar habitat wherever possible.
- Deliver it to an authorized rehabilitation facility if injured, sick or orphaned.

You can use an agent

You may use a wildlife control agent to act on your behalf to carry out or assist with wildlife removal. The agent must have authorization from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry or belong to a regulated class of agents (e.g., wildlife removal company, licensed trapper).

Encounters with Coyotes

Coyotes are usually wary of humans and avoid people whenever possible. However, they are wild animals and should not be approached.

People should never feed coyotes. Feeding makes animals less fearful of humans and habituates them to foods provided by humans. Never attempt to 'tame' a coyote.

What to do if you encounter a coyote

Coyote sightings are commonplace. If you see a coyote, keep your distance and the animal will most likely avoid you.

If you encounter an aggressive coyote, there are several things you should know and do:

- Never approach or touch a coyote.
- Do not turn your back on, or run from, a coyote.
- Back away from the coyote while remaining calm.
- Stand tall, wave your hands and make lots of noise.
- Carry a flashlight at night to scare off coyotes.
- If a coyote poses an immediate threat or danger to public safety, call 911.



Table: Roles and Responsibilities for Human-Wildlife Conflict in Ontario

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF)

- The ministry is responsible for administering the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 (FWCA), which sets out the conditions under which certain mammals, including coyotes, can be harassed, captured or killed, and by whom.
- The ministry takes the approach outlined in the 'Strategy for preventing and managing human wildlife conflicts in Ontario' to help people and municipalities address problems with wildlife, which includes:
 - Providing information to municipalities and landowners on how to avoid and resolve conflict situations
 - Working with police at their request, in responding to emergency situations that may pose an immediate threat to public safety
 - Conducting research and sharing results (e.g., urban coyote behaviour and movement)

Municipality

- The Municipal Act allows for municipalities to create bylaws to address causes of human-wildlife conflict (e.g., no feeding of wildlife, waste management and municipal licensing/certification of wildlife removal companies).
- Municipalities are responsible for deciding on and taking appropriate actions when human-wildlife encounters create ongoing conflict situations on municipal property and can also take action on private property with the permission of the landowner.

Police

- Police are responsible for responding to emergencies impacting the health and safety of the public. This may involve responding to human-wildlife conflicts where an animal poses an immediate threat to personal safety. In these cases, police can dispatch the animal if they decide it is necessary to protect public safety.
- Police may request assistance from the ministry during daylight hours.

Private Property Owners

- Private property owners may be required to adhere to local municipal bylaws that pertain to human-wildlife conflict prevention (e.g., no feeding of wildlife, waste management, etc.).
- The FWCA enables persons to take certain actions to protect their property from wildlife damage (including retaining an agent to take action on their behalf).
- Landowners can play a role by reducing attractants and managing conflicts on their properties.