

City of Isle of Palms, SC Coyote Management Plan



**City of Isle of Palms, SC
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 City's primary concern 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 employs 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.

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.

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:

Coyote Smart - To exist together at the same time. Coyote Smart 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, so as to be coyote smart.

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, barbecue 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 City of Isle of Palms will provide education and information to residents and visitors on how to be coyote smart. The City 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 Isle of Palms Police Department and Animal Control to organize and implement the education outreach program.

Examples of educational outreach:

1. Educational brochures will be made available in City's facilities.
2. Information will be distributed to community liaisons in response to reports of human/coyotes conflicts.
3. Coyote information will be available on the City of Isle of Palms website at www.iop.net.
4. Educational programs for HOAs and other groups will be available.
5. Educational wildlife informational signs will be posted in appropriate parks and open spaces.

Reporting and Tracking

It is imperative that the City has an efficient and consistent reporting of human-coyote interactions. A City of Isle of Palms Police Department Incident report will be completed on all reports of coyote incidents, attacks and pet loss/attack (see definitions). Reported coyote encounters will continue to be tracked by the police department on a monthly list including locations and times.

These reports will be forwarded to 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 officers to identify "hot spots" where 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). Animal Control will provide educational information to residents on hazing coyotes and suggested techniques.

Lethal Control

The City, at the sole discretion of City Council, may implement a program of lethal control when the interactions between persons and coyotes escalate to the level of incident or attack. The City of Isle of Palms 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 City of Isle of Palms Police Department in the affected area.

Public Spaces: The City, at sole discretion of City Council, 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 City of Isle of Palms may employ lawful methods to control nuisance wildlife on their property.

Adopted by City Council on May 22, 2018.