# City of Mercer Island

# Coyote Management Plan

## Executive Summary

The intent of this plan is to provide guidance for City staff, residents, and business owners in managing encounters with coyotes within the City of Mercer Island (City). This plan does not supersede federal, state, county, or city laws, regulations, ordinances, or policies. Further, the provisions of this plan do not restrict the legal rights of City residents, businesses, or property owners to pursue their legal rights in dealing with coyotes, such as the hiring of wildlife control operators.

**Management Strategy**

The City's strategy for managing coyotes shall consist of a two-pronged approach:

1) Public education designed around co-existence with coyotes.
2) Ensuring public safety by implementing appropriate tiered responses to coyote and human interactions. This plan requires active participation on the part of the entire community, including residents, homeowners' associations, and volunteers.

**Public Education**

Education is a critical component of appropriate decision making by residents regarding their safety as well as the security of their property and pets. The goals of public education shall be to decrease attractants for coyotes, to reshape coyote behavior through hazing, to create reasonable resident expectations of normal coyote behavior, and to facilitate coexistence. The City will provide information on coyote conflict prevention online at the City's Let's Talk webpage and may engage in additional educational efforts, such as hosting informational webinars or doing outreach on social media.

**Response Plan**

The City has developed a detailed response plan to provide a means to identify and categorize types of human and coyote interactions.

**Reducing Attractants**

A key component of reducing interactions between coyotes and humans is reducing attractants for coyotes. Coyotes are drawn to suburban areas such as the City for the following reasons:

**1) Food.** Suburban areas can support large numbers of rodents and animals such as coyotes. Further, coyotes can be attracted into suburban neighborhoods especially by food associated with humans, such as: fallen fruit, pet food, and unsecured trash/compost. Feeding of wildlife (both intentional and unintentional) can cause coyotes to associate humans with food. This in turn, can create negative interactions between humans, coyotes, and pets. Tips for reducing coyote food attractants:

- <u>Never</u> intentionally feed a coyote.
- Do not feed raccoons or other wildlife.
- Avoid feeding pets outside. Remove outside pet food and water. If feeding outside is strictly necessary, remove leftover food (if any) and the pet's food bowl promptly.
- Do not compost meat or dairy.
- Maintain good yard maintenance, including regular raking of areas around bird feeders.
- Keep trash well secured in containers with tight lids (or use bungee cords or the like to secure the lids). Only place trash receptacles outside the morning of trash collection (instead of overnights).
- Specially bag food wastes that are attractive to coyotes, such as leftover pet food, meat scraps, etc. prior to placing them in trash receptacles.

**2) Water.** Suburban areas can provide year-round water (storm water facilities, artificial ponds or lakes, irrigation, pet water bowls). During dry seasons especially, remove water bowls for pets from outside and put away all watering cans.

**3) Unattended Pets**. Coyotes can consider small pets to be prey. Free roaming pets, especially cats and small dogs, may attract coyotes into neighborhoods. The best way to minimize risk to pets is to not leave them outside unattended.  For small dogs, keep them on a leash that is no longer than six feet (coyotes may see dogs on longer leashes as unattended). This is especially important if you are in or near open space areas. Unattended small dogs are attractive to coyotes as prey, however coyotes are naturally afraid of humans. Protect any other small domestic pets (such as rabbits) by enclosing them in protective fencing or sturdy cages (or consider bringing them inside).

# Coyote Management Plan

**Response Plan**

The City has developed a three-tiered response plan to provide a mechanism to identify and classify different types of interactions between coyotes and humans. The City police department will log and track reports of coyote encounters for the purposes of classification based on the three tiers of the response plan.

Note: Suggested responses for residents are just that: suggestions only. Residents are responsible for assessing their individual circumstances and assuming the risk of pursuing any of the suggested actions listed below. The City is not responsible for any damages or injuries caused by coyotes.

Further, the response plan includes only possible responses by the City (not guaranteed responses). Nothing in this plan obligates the City to pursue any particular response. Further, detailed investigations may be necessary before the City may pursue certain possible responses.

| Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 |
|---|---|---|
| Reported Coyote Action:<br>• Heard<br>• Seen moving at night<br>• Seen resting at night<br>• Suspected pet attack | Reported Coyote Action:<br>• Seen during day in parks or on streets<br>• Seen resting near humans<br>• Entering a yard during daytime hours (with or without pets)<br>• Pet attack (unattended) | Reported Coyote Action:<br>• Stalking a human (with or without pets)<br>• Loitering during the day around schools, play areas, and parks with children present<br>• Pet attack (attended)<br>• Threatening a human<br>• Attack on a human (unprovoked) |
| Suggested Resident Response:<br>• Report incident to MIPD Non-emergency number:<br>(425) 577-5656<br>• Review educational resources<br>• Conduct yard audit<br>• Begin hazing | Suggested Resident Response:<br>• Report incident to MIPD Non-emergency number:<br>(425) 577-5656<br>• Review educational resources<br>• Conduct yard audit<br>• Continue/escalate hazing<br>• Consider hiring Wildlife Control Operator | Suggested Resident Response:<br>• Report incident to MIPD Non-emergency number:<br>(425) 577-5656<br>**(call 911 if you are in immediate danger)**<br>• Review educational resources<br>• Conduct yard audit<br>• Continue/escalate hazing<br>• Consider hiring Wildlife Control Operator |
| Possible City Response: | Possible City Response: | Possible City Response: |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Provide educational materials, which may include information on hazing techniques. | • Provide educational materials, which may include information on aggressive hazing techniques.<br>• Identify hazing strategy.<br>• Investigate incident(s).<br>• Consult with WDFW and USDA, if necessary, especially in the event of multiple yellow level encounters within a short time period. | • Provide educational materials, which may include information on aggressive hazing techniques.<br>• Community outreach/notification.<br>• Identify hazing strategy.<br>• Investigate incident(s).<br>• Consult with WDFW and USDA regarding lethal removal, if necessary. |

# Definitions

**Active Coexistence:** Humans and coyotes exist together. Humans can take an active role in keeping coyotes wild by learning about coyote behavior, ecology, removing items that attract coyotes, taking responsibility for the safety of their pets, and hazing coyotes when they enter community or neighborhood spaces.

**Attack (Provoked)**: A coyote attacks a human following an incident in which the human interacts with the coyote or encourages the coyote to engage (such as having a dog off leash in an on-leash area or intentionally approaching or feeding wildlife).

**Attack (Unprovoked)**: A coyote attacks a human without an incident in which the human encourages the coyote to engage.

**Encounter**: Unexpected, direct meeting between a coyote and a human.

**Hazing**: A training method employing the use of deterrents to discourage coyotes from engaging in undesirable behavior or activity or to move coyotes out of a particular area. Hazing includes, but is not limited to: the use of loud noises such as clapping, shouting, using air horns, the use of bright lights, and throwing objects near coyotes (but not at them).

**Pet Attack (Attended):** A coyote attacks a pet on a leash or a pet that is within six feet of a human.

**Pet Attack (Unattended):** A coyote attacks a pet that is not on a leash or within six feet of a human. The term includes coyote predation on domestic pets, such as outdoor cats.

**Suspected Pet Attack**: Incident where eaten remains of a pet are found or a pet is missing for an unknown reason. Coyotes may feed on recently dead or dying animals, such as pets that are hit by cars.

**Stalking**: Behavior where a coyote follows a human with or without a pet on a leash.

**Threat**: Behavior where a coyote approaches a human and growls, bares teeth, or lunges.

**Wildlife Control Operator:** a person who has successfully completed the training and obtained one or more levels of certification from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to assist landowners to prevent or control problems caused by wildlife.