



City of Needles, California

Request for City Council Action

CITY COUNCIL NPUA

Regular Special

Meeting Date: January 21, 2025

Title: Research on Ordinance for Coyotes in the City of Needles

Background: At the January 14, 2025, City Council meeting, staff were directed to explore the feasibility of implementing ordinances to address coyote interactions within the rural City of Needles. Coyotes are prevalent in rural and desert areas and have increasingly adapted to urban environments, often resulting in conflicts with residents.

Under California law, coyotes are classified as non-game mammals, allowing them to be hunted year-round with a valid California hunting license in designated areas. However, relocation of coyotes requires written permission from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). These regulatory frameworks highlight the need for localized management strategies tailored to the specific challenges of rural communities like Needles.

Existing Ordinances in Other Rural Cities:

In rural California, many cities and counties adopt coyote management plans focused on education, coexistence, and community-based strategies. Key practices include:

- **Public Education:** Teaching residents how to minimize coyote encounters by securing food sources, supervising pets, and maintaining clean yards.
- **Deterrent Strategies:** Encouraging the use of humane deterrents like motion-sensor lights or noise devices to keep coyotes away.
- **Removal Policies:** Establishing clear guidelines for when and how to remove problem coyotes in collaboration with wildlife agencies.

Examples include the City of Palmdale's educational campaigns and Riverside County's predator control programs.

Current Ordinances in the City of Needles:

The City of Needles currently has ordinances that may apply to coyote management:

1. Section 4-18 of the City of Needles Municipal Code – Means of Capture:

- Provides authority to law enforcement and Animal Control Officers to use tranquilizers or other means to capture, subdue, or remove animals running at large or posing a threat to public safety.

While this addresses immediate threats, it does not provide a comprehensive framework for managing coyote populations or preventing conflicts.

Challenges Specific to Rural Areas:

1. Extensive Habitat Range:

Coyotes benefit from access to undeveloped land around Needles, complicating population control efforts.

2. Resource Limitations:

Smaller rural communities often lack funding and personnel to implement intensive wildlife management programs.

3. Public Safety Concerns:

Coyotes in residential areas pose potential risks to pets, livestock, and occasionally humans, requiring a balanced approach that addresses safety and ecological conservation.

Next Steps:

1. **Develop a Coyote Management Plan:** Include public education initiatives, clear guidelines for when intervention is necessary, and coordination with CDFW for compliance with state regulations.
2. **Community Workshops:** Engage residents to share best practices for reducing coyote attractants and ensuring safety.
3. **Policy Updates:** Consider adopting ordinances that outline a proactive, long-term approach to coyote management in rural settings.

Environmental Impact: N/A

Fiscal Impact: The estimated cost to develop a coyote management ordinance, including associated staff time, attorney fees, public outreach, training, and materials, ranges from \$12,000 to \$25,000.

Recommended Action: Provide direction to staff regarding the next steps in addressing coyote management.

Submitted By: Tony Rubalcaba, Animal Control Officer

City Manager Approval: Patrick J. Martinez

Date: 1/23/2025

Other Department Approval (when required): Barbara DiLeo

Date: 1/23/2025

Approved: <input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved: <input type="checkbox"/>	Tabled: <input type="checkbox"/>	Other: <input type="checkbox"/>
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