



Coyote Management and Co-Existence Plan

**Final Plan
August 2022**

About the Plan

This Coyote Management and Co-existence plan has been prepared by the City of San Fernando to educate residents and visitors in humanely and effectively preventing and solving conflicts among coyotes, people, and companion animals. This plan references several existing plans that sourced scientific and peer-reviewed articles from experts in the field of human-coyote conflict resolution, and from successful coyote management plans in neighboring foothill communities. This plan's format and approach is similar to the U.S. Humane Society's approach for Coyote management and coexistence. For more information about solving conflicts with coyotes, please visit the U.S. Humane Society's website at www.humanesociety.org/coyotes.

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- City of Calabasas Coyote Management Plan
- San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments Regional Coyote Management Framework
- City of Arcadia Coyote Management Plan

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Plan prepared by City of San Fernando Staff

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Plan Approach

The goal of this Coyote Management and Coexistence Plan is to reduce human-coyote conflicts while prioritizing human safety. The suggested actions outlined in this plan are designed to increase citizens' knowledge and understanding of how coyotes behave and make clear how such behavior can be managed to reduce or eliminate conflicts.

This Coyote Management and Co-existence Plan is based on scientific research, a thorough understanding of coyote ecology and biology in suburban settings, and the best known management practices and management tools. This plan is guided by the following basic principles:

1. Human safety is a priority in managing human-coyote interactions.
2. Coyotes serve an important role in ecosystems by helping to control the population of rodents, rabbits, and other suburban mammals.
3. Preventive practices such as reduction and removal of food attractants, habitat modification, and responding appropriately when interacting with wildlife are key to minimizing potential interactions with coyotes.
4. Solutions for coyote conflicts must address both problematic coyote behaviors (such as aggression towards people and attacks on pets) and the problematic human behaviors (intentionally or unintentionally feeding coyotes and letting pets outside unattended) that contribute to conflicts.

5. Coyote removal programs are ineffective for reducing coyote population sizes or preventing human-coyote conflicts.

6. A community-driven effort that involves residents is necessary for achieving co-existence among people, coyotes, and pets.

The Coyote

Coyotes are native to California. Due to their intelligence and adaptability, as well as extensive urbanization and the subsequent decline of larger predators, coyotes have successfully expanded their range across North America. Coyotes are now found in all states in the U.S., except Hawaii, and have become well established in nearly every ecosystem. They live in deserts, swamps, tundra, grasslands, brush, dense forests, cities and suburbs. It is important to keep in mind that coyotes have been interacting with and adapting to people for at least the last 100 years.

Ecological Importance

Coyotes are curious, smart and adaptable creatures and suburban areas provide the perfect balance of food, shelter and water for them. Even in urbanized landscapes, coyotes can play an important role in their environment by providing ecosystem services and helping to maintain species diversity. Coyotes in suburban areas not only provide free rodent control by feeding on mice and rats, but also help to regulate the population size of other species that may cause



San Gabriel Mountain Range.

conflicts with people (such as meadow mice, wild turkeys, white-tailed deer and Canada geese).

General Reproduction and Behavior

Most coyotes weigh approximately 25-35 pounds, although their long legs and thick fur make them appear larger. Coyote fur varies in color from gray-brown to yellow-gray. They have a black-tipped tail, which helps to distinguish them from other animals such as foxes. Coyotes also have yellow/amber eyes (which help to distinguish them from domestic dogs), large ears and narrow, pointed muzzles (which help to distinguish them from wolves). Coyotes are skittish and naturally afraid of humans. Their signs (including prints, scat, and vocalizations) may be an indicator of their presence. More commonly, coyote howling or other vocalizations may be heard. Coyotes produce a variety of sounds (including howls, barks, whines and yips) to communicate with one another and defend their territory. Small groups of coyotes (2-3) can distort their voices and sound like a group of 20.

Diet

Coyotes are opportunistic omnivores (eat meat and plants) with great flexibility in their diet. They generally hunt small mammals such as mice, rats, field mice, and rabbits, but will also eat fruit and berries and will even scavenge road-killed animals. In suburban areas, coyotes are known to eat pet food, unsecured garbage and compost. They may also prey on unattended domestic pets such as cats and small dogs if given the opportunity. This behavior can be prevented by reducing human-associated food attractants and not letting pets outside unattended (unless protected by a coyote-proof enclosure or fence).

Social Structure

Most coyotes (called resident coyotes) live in family groups with one breeding pair and 3-4 other related individuals. Coyotes do not hunt in packs, but work together to defend their territory from other coyote family groups. Other coyotes (called transient coyotes) live alone or as an isolated mated pair. Coyotes mate once per year, during their breeding season (which occurs from January through March). During the pup season (April – August), the breeding pair will give birth

to pups (typically in April or May). Litter size depends on available resources and the number of coyotes in the area. The average litter size is four to seven pups. Coyotes will place their pups in a den for the first six weeks, after which the pups will learn to hunt with their parents. Coyote dens are found in steep banks, rock crevices and underbrush, as well as in open areas. During dispersal season (September – December), the pups from the previous year (yearlings) will leave the family group and become transient coyotes in search of a new home range.

Habitat

Coyotes are naturally most active at dawn and dusk, but often shift to more nocturnal activity in urban and suburban areas in an effort to avoid people. Coyotes prefer open space and natural preserve areas over human-dominated landscapes, but are extremely adept at living in proximity to people. Coyotes thrive in these areas because food, water, and shelter are abundant. Home range sizes vary for each individual coyote. Research has shown that home range sizes for resident coyotes average 2-5 square miles, while transient coyotes have larger home ranges (averaging 10 square miles). For reference, the City of San Fernando is 2.4 square miles. Home range size can be an important indicator of resource distribution and abundance and also may correlate with population density. The San Gabriel Mountain Range, for example, is an ideal habitat for Coyotes and within close proximity to the City of San Fernando.



Coyote Attractants in San Fernando

Food

Coyotes can be attracted into neighborhoods by human-associated food such as pet food, unsecured compost or trash, and fallen fruit in yards. Intentional and unintentional feeding can lead coyotes to associate humans with sources of food, which can result in negative interactions among coyotes, people and pets. To reduce food attractants in San Fernando:

- Never hand-feed or otherwise deliberately feed a coyote. It is unlawful to feed coyotes in San Fernando.¹
- Avoid feeding pets outside. Remove sources of pet food and water. If feeding pets outside is necessary, remove the bowl and any leftover food promptly.
- Never compost any meat or dairy (unless the compost is fully secured).
- Maintain good housekeeping, such as regularly raking areas around bird feeders, to help discourage coyote activity near residences.
- Remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Keep trash in high-quality containers with tight-fitting lids. Only place the cans curbside the morning of collection. If you leave out overnight, trash cans are more likely to be tipped over and broken into.
- Bag especially attractive food wastes such as meat scraps or leftover pet food.



Unattended dog food may attract coyotes.

Water

Cities may provide a year-round supply of water in the form of storm water impoundments and channels (the Pacoima Wash), artificial lakes, irrigation, pet water dishes, etc., which support both coyotes and their prey. In dry conditions, water can be as alluring as food, so residents should remove outdoor water bowls/cans, and secure fountains, pools, and Jacuzzis.



Water sources may attract coyotes.

Shelter

Parks, greenbelts, open spaces, golf courses, buildings, sheds, decks and crawl spaces, etc., increase the amount and variability of cover for coyotes. They allow coyotes to safely and easily remain close to people, pets, homes and businesses without detection. In the spring, when coyotes give birth and begin to raise young, they concentrate their activities around dens or burrows in which their young are sheltered. Coyotes may take advantage of available spaces under sheds or decks for use as a den, bringing them into close contact with people and pets. As a resource, a **Yard Audit Checklist (Appendix A)** is available for all residents to help minimize attractants.

Unattended Pets

Pets are common in San Fernando. Within their territory, coyotes may consider pets as potential prey or potential competitors. **The following techniques are recommended for pet owners:**

- Free-roaming pets, especially cats and sometimes

¹ The City of San Fernando's Ordinances regarding animal care and control follows Title 10 of the Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances. Chapter 10.84 – Feeding of Certain Animals, states it is unlawful to feed a non-domesticated mammalian predator (which includes coyotes, raccoons, foxes, and opossums).

small dogs, may attract coyotes into neighborhoods. The best way to minimize risk to pets is to not leave them outside unattended.

- Coyotes primarily eat small mammals such as mice and rats, but will also prey on slightly larger mammals such as rabbits and groundhogs. Approximately the same size as a groundhog or rabbit, **free-roaming outdoor cats** may also be seen as eligible prey items by coyotes. It is important to note that attacks on cats are normal coyote behavior and do not indicate a danger for people. The only way to protect cats from coyotes (and the other dangers of outdoor life such as cars, disease, dogs and other wildlife) is to keep cats indoors (or only let them outside in a secure enclosure or when accompanied by a person and under the control of a leash and harness).
- While residents who feed **feral cats** are often concerned that coyotes might prey on the cats, the act of feeding feral cats may cause more harm than good, as coyotes often frequent these locations. Residents should not feed feral cats to avoid attracting coyotes. Although it can be difficult for residents to protect feral cats from coyotes, the following tips can be helpful:
 - Do not feed feral cats.
 - Haze coyotes seen near feral cat locations. Making coyotes feel uncomfortable will encourage them to stay out of the area. See **page 9 (Basic Hazing)** for a list of effective hazing strategies.
- **Dogs** are also vulnerable to coyote confrontations. These incidents generally involve coyotes who are accustomed or habituated to people (usually due to wildlife feeding), or coyotes who are protecting their territory and pups (usually during breeding season).
 - Small, unattended dogs may be seen as potential prey for coyotes. It is important to either keep dogs on a leash six feet long or shorter when outdoors or to stay within six feet of them when outside.² Coyotes may view a dog on a leash longer than six feet as an unattended pet. Attacks on unattended, small dogs are normal coyote behavior and do not

indicate a danger for people.

- Although attacks on larger dogs are rarer, coyotes will sometimes go after a large dog when they feel that their territory is threatened. This generally occurs during the coyote breeding season, which takes place from January through March. During this time, it is especially important not to let dogs outside unattended and to keep them on leashes (six feet long or less) when in public areas.
- Fences can be used to keep coyotes out of residential yards. To prevent coyotes from digging under a fence, it should extend underground at least twelve inches or include an L-shaped mesh apron that extends outward at least 18 inches and is secured with landscape staples.
- Other domestic animals kept outside, such as chickens and rabbits, may also be viewed as prey by coyotes.



Do not feed feral cats- the food may attract coyotes.



Keep dogs on a leash no longer than six feet.

² The City of San Fernando’s Ordinance regarding leash laws follows Title 10 of the Los Angeles County Code. Chapter 10.32.010 - Dogs. A dog must be restrained on a substantial leash not exceeding six feet in length by a person capable of controlling the dog, while on public property or common areas of private property. An owner or custodian of a dog may allow the dog to be unrestrained on private property with the owner’s or lessor’s consent.

Strategies for Dealing with Coyotes

Monitoring & Collecting Data

Monitoring and data collection can help the City document where coyotes are frequently seen, count how many coyotes are within an area, and identify human-coyote conflict hot spots. Gathering specific data on incidents will allow for targeting of educational campaigns and conflict mitigation efforts, as well as the ability to measure success in reducing conflicts over time. Residents are encouraged to use the publicly available Coyote Catcher online mapping tool to report encounters with coyotes. The reporting tool is available at: https://ucanr.edu/sites/CoyoteCatcher/Story_Map/. The City of San Fernando will develop a similar mapping tool during in early 2023 to host on the City web site.

Education & Outreach

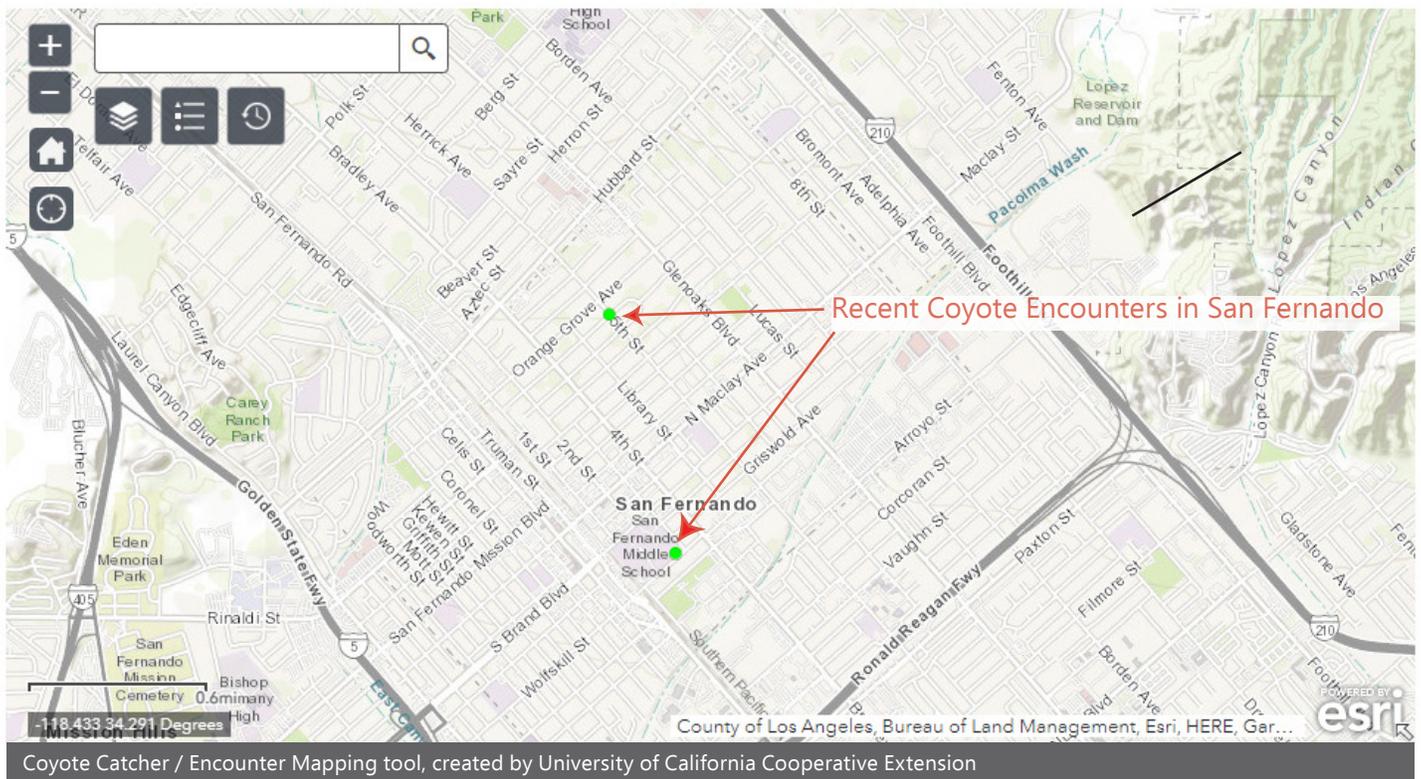
A critical element of a successful coyote management plan is the education and awareness for residents. Education is the key to having residents make appropriate decisions regarding their safety and managing their property and pets. This involves decreasing food attractants, taking precautions with pets, and creating tolerance of normal coyote behavior. The best solution for addressing problematic coyote behavior is by promoting Coyote Hazing. The City will promote strategies for dealing with coyotes by mailing the **Coyotes in San Fernando informational flyer (Appendix B)**, which is also available in Spanish.

Hazing: an intervention technique

Generally, coyotes are reclusive animals who avoid human contact. When Coyotes lose their fear of humans, they may visit public areas even when people are present and may cause conflicts with people and pets. Humans have contributed to this habituation of

Coyote Encounters by Zip Code

Use this map to explore the number of coyote encounters since the first day of the present calendar year. Use the layer control  to turn the different data layers on and off. Use the legend control  to view the legend. For a mobile-friendly version of the map click [here](#).



coyotes by not reacting when they see a coyote. We have a tendency to either ignore them due to fear or to be enamored by them because they are wild animals. To coexist safely, it is important to modify this behavior and attitude in resident coyote populations.

Hazing is an activity or series of activities that is conducted in an attempt to change behaviors of habituated coyotes and/or to re-instill a healthy fear of people in the local coyote population. Hazing techniques include generating loud noises, spraying water, shining bright lights, throwing objects, shouting, etc. Hazing can help maintain a coyote's fear of humans and deter them from neighborhood spaces such as backyards, greenbelts and play spaces.

A hazing program encourages the use of harassing actions without employing weapons or causing bodily harm to the coyote. The more often an individual animal is hazed, the more effective hazing is in changing coyote behavior. Being highly intelligent animals, coyotes who are hazed quickly learn to avoid neighborhoods, people, and pets.

The goals of hazing are to:

- Reverse the habituation of coyotes to people, teaching them to once again fear and avoid humans
- Discourage coyotes from entering public areas such as parks, playgrounds and yards when people are present
- Discourage coyotes from approaching people and pets
- Empower residents by giving them tools to use when they encounter a coyote, thereby reducing their fear of coyotes
- Increase awareness about coyote behavior among residents and involve the community in coyote management efforts

Basic hazing

Consists of directly facing the coyote and being "big and loud" by waving your arms over your head, making loud noises or squirting the coyote with water until the coyote(s) chooses to leave. Using a variety of different hazing tools is critical because coyotes can become desensitized to the continued use of just one technique, sound or action.

Basic Hazing Techniques:

- Stand tall, make yourself big, wave your arms and shout (don't scream) while approaching the coyote until he or she runs away
- Use a noisemaker, such as: your voice, an air horn, pots and pans banged together, a whistle, a shake can (such as a soda can filled with coins or pebbles), jingling keys, or an umbrella popping open and closed
- Use a projectile (toward, not AT the coyote), such as:
 - sticks • clumps of dirt • small rocks • a tennis ball
- During warm months, use liquids, such as:
 - a garden hose • a water gun • water balloons

Note: if a coyote has never been hazed before, he or she may not run away immediately just by you vocalizing. You may need to approach the coyote while incorporating some of the above-mentioned deterrents. If the coyote runs a short distance, stops, and turns to look at you, continue to haze the coyote until he or she has completely left the area.

High-intensity hazing

Consists of approaching the animal quickly and aggressively, throwing projectiles, paint balls, pepper balls, sling shots, clay pellets or pepper spray at the coyote. High-intensity hazing should only be carried out by trained professionals such as animal control and police officers. High-intensity hazing should be used in specific areas and only in response to more serious incidents.

Enforcement and Lethal Control

Enforcement in San Fernando

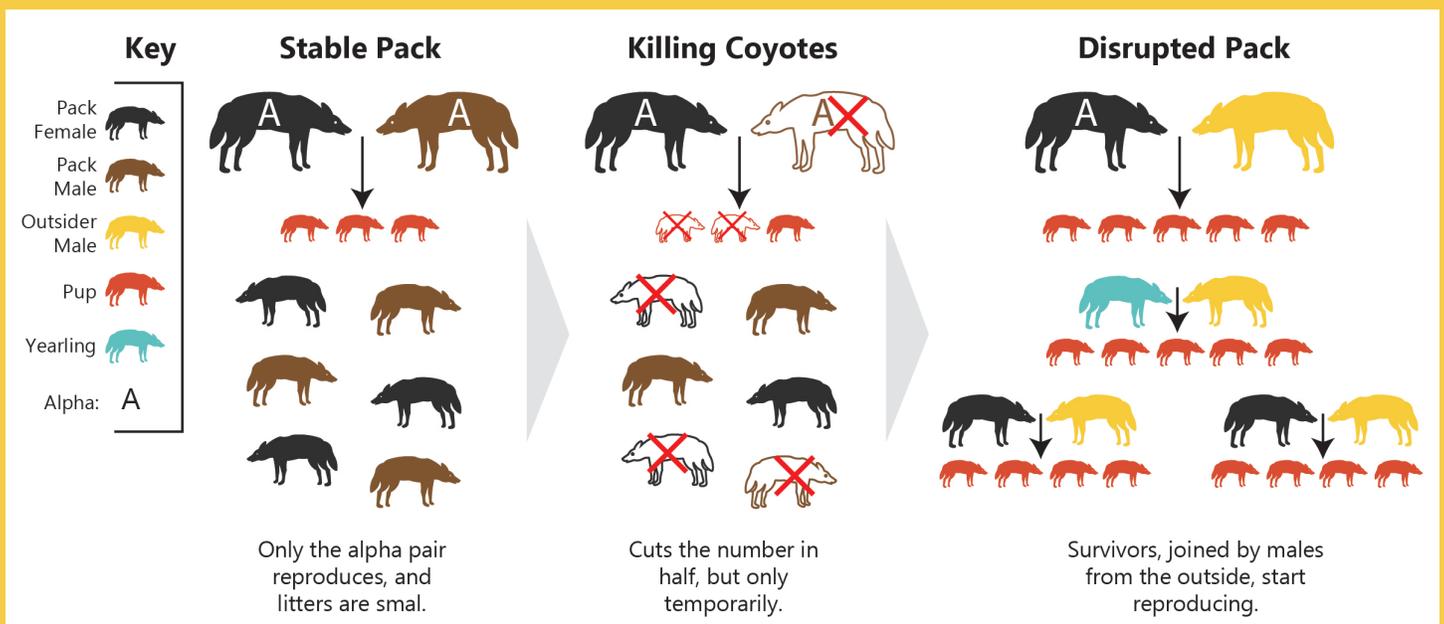
When one or more coyotes are observed in San Fernando and reported to the City, the San Fernando Police Department may monitor, patrol, or enforce a specific area if the reported encounter warrants enforcement. San Fernando Police Department may also notify animal control if assistance is necessary. If a coyote encounter is aggressive towards a human, the Police Department may use lethal action to ensure safety of the community. The San Fernando Police Department does not have the training or expertise to trap or relocate coyotes. If a coyote is deemed to be ill (incapacitated), the Police Department may contact the California State Department of Fish and Wildlife for support. For a complete list of types of incidents and appropriate response by the City of San Fernando, see the **Coyote Incident Response Guide (Appendix C)**.

Lethal Control

Lethal control programs may seem like a quick fix to problems among coyotes, people and pets. However, removal programs are not effective in reducing coyote populations or addressing the root causes of conflicts. Coyote removal programs are costly (due to the difficulty of catching coyotes) and controversial among the public. When implementing lethal control, it is extremely difficult to ensure that problem-causing coyote(s) will be the ones located and killed. Since firearms are usually unsafe to use in urban and suburban areas, traps (which are by design non-selective for particular coyotes) are generally the method used. Because coyotes are so intelligent and wary of human scent, it is very difficult to catch any coyote in a trap, never mind the problem-causing coyote. Research has shown that when lethally controlled, coyotes exhibit a "rebound effect" (a surge in their reproductive rates), allowing for quick regeneration of their population numbers. The disruption of their family group structure leads to an increase in the number of females breeding in the population, and the increase in available resources leads to larger litter sizes, earlier breeding ages among females and higher survival rates among

The Problem With Lethal Control

Lethal measures may result in a larger coyote problem. Kill one or both members of the alpha pair (A) - the only one that normally reproduces- and other pairs will form and reproduce. At the same time, lone coyotes will move in to mate, young coyotes will start having offspring sooner, and litter sizes will grow.



pups. This allows coyote populations to bounce back quickly, even when as much as 70% of their numbers are removed through lethal control efforts. For these reasons, lethal programs are not effective at reducing coyote populations, and non-selective coyote trapping programs are not effective at solving conflicts. In addition, coyotes removed from an area will quickly be replaced by transient coyotes looking for a vacant home range. If the root causes of human-coyote conflicts have not been addressed, incoming coyotes may quickly become nuisance coyotes as well. It is far better to have well-behaved resident coyotes who will hold territories and keep transients at bay than to risk having to deal with newcomers who do not know the "rules."

Lethal responses (coyote removal) should be considered only in the event of an unprovoked, confirmed attack on a human. If implemented, lethal control efforts should focus on the offending coyote(s) only, rather than the coyote population at large. This requires significant surveillance efforts to make sure that the correct animal(s) is targeted and removed. Lethal control should be considered as only one of a suite of management interventions (e.g. removal of attractants, hazing, etc.) that involve an array of humane and non-lethal measures. If non-lethal control techniques are effective enough to reduce human-coyote interactions and conflicts to acceptable levels, then the lethal control option may remain for aggressive coyote-human interactions.



Appendix

A - Yard Audit Checklist

B - Coyotes in San Fernando, Sample Informational Flyer

C - Coyote Incident Response Guide

Yard Audit Checklist

	No Action Required	Adjustment Required	Recommended Action
FOOD			Never intentionally feed a coyote
Pet Food			Never feed pets outdoors; store all pet food securely indoors.
Water Sources			Remove water attractants, such as pet water bowls.
Bird Feeders			Remove bird feeders or clean fallen seed to reduce the presence of small mammals that coyotes prefer to eat.
Fallen Fruit			Clean up fallen fruits around trees.
Compost			Do not include meat or dairy among compost contents unless the area is fully enclosed.
BBQ Grills			Clean up food around BBQ grills after each use.
Trash			Secure trash containers with locking lids and place curbside on pickup day. Periodically clean cans to reduce residual odors.
LANDSCAPING			Trim vegetation to reduce hiding places for rodents and coyotes and potential denning sites.
STRUCTURES			Restrict access under decks and sheds, around wood piles, or any other structure that can provide cover or denning sites for coyotes or their prey.
FENCING*			Ensure that there are no gaps and that the bottom of the fence extends underground six inches or is fitted with a mesh apron to deter coyotes from digging underneath. *Must comply with local municipal code
PETS			Never leave pets unattended outside. Never allow pets to "play" with coyotes. Fully enclose outdoor pet kennels. Walk pets on a leash no longer than 6 feet in length.

Coyotes in San Fernando

Tips for living with coyotes

- Never hand-feed or otherwise deliberately feed a coyote. It is unlawful to feed coyotes in San Fernando.
- Avoid feeding pets outside. Remove sources of pet food and water. If feeding pets outside is necessary, remove the bowl and any leftover food promptly.
- Do not feed feral cats. • Remove fallen fruit from the ground.
- Small, unattended dogs may be seen as potential prey for coyotes. It is important to either keep dogs on a leash six feet long or shorter when outdoors or to stay within six feet of them when outside.
- If you see a coyote, make sure to scare it away (hazing) by shouting, using a whistle, and making yourself big.
- If a coyote encounter is aggressive, the Police Department may use lethal action to ensure safety of the community.
- The Police Department may contact the Department of Fish and Wildlife to assist with removal of wounded or ill (incapacitated) coyotes.
- Help track coyote encounters by visiting the Coyote Catcher Mapping Tool.



The City of San Fernando has developed a Coyote Management and Co-existence Plan in response to resident concerns. For more information and additional resources on how to prevent coyote encounters, visit: www.sfcity.org.



Coyotes en San Fernando

Consejos para vivir con coyotes

- Nunca alimente a mano o deliberadamente a un coyote. Es ilegal alimentar a los coyotes en San Fernando.
- Evite alimentar a las mascotas afuera. Retire las fuentes de alimentos y agua para mascotas. Si es necesario alimentar a las mascotas al aire libre, retire el tazón y los restos de comida de inmediato.
- No alimente a los gatos salvajes. • Retire la fruta caída del suelo.
- Los perros pequeños y desatendidos pueden verse como presas potenciales para los coyotes. Es importante mantener a los perros con una correa de seis pies de largo o menos cuando están al aire libre o permanecer a menos de seis pies de ellos cuando están afuera.
- Si ve un coyote, asegúrese de asustarlo (novatadas) gritando, usando un silbato y haciéndose grande.
- Si un encuentro con un coyote es agresivo, el Departamento de Policía puede usar una acción letal para garantizar la seguridad de la comunidad.
- El Departamento de Policía puede comunicarse con el Departamento de Pesca y Vida Silvestre para ayudar con la remoción de coyotes heridos o enfermos (incapacitados).
- Ayude a rastrear los encuentros con coyotes visitando la herramienta de mapeo Coyote Catcher.



La Ciudad de San Fernando ha desarrollado un Plan de Manejo y Coexistencia de Coyotes en respuesta a las preocupaciones de los residentes. Para obtener más información y recursos adicionales sobre cómo prevenir encuentros con coyotes, visite: www.sfcity.org.



Coyote Incident Response Guide

Coyote Behavior	Classification Level	Response
Coyote heard or seen moving in public area	1 - Sighting	Sighting report will be reviewed, and if appropriate, a response will be provided by e-mail or phone. The City would direct residents to available resources on normal coyote behavior.
Coyote seen resting in public area	1 - Sighting	Sighting report will be reviewed, and if appropriate, a response will be provided by e-mail or phone. The City would direct residents to available resources on normal coyote behavior.
Coyote seen resting in public area with humans present	2 - Sighting	The City provides resources for the resident to be educated on hazing techniques and how to eliminate local attractants.
Coyote entering a yard to a home with or without pets present	2 - Sighting	The City provides resources for the resident to be educated on hazing techniques and how to eliminate local attractants.
Coyote entering a yard and injuring or killing attended or unattended pet	3 - Pet Attack	The City gathers information on specific animal involved, report on circumstances, and provide information for the household to be educated on coyote attractants, yard audits, and pet safety information.
Coyote biting or injuring an unattended pet/pet on a leash	4 - Encounter / Pet Attack	The City gathers information on specific animal involved, report on circumstances, and provide information for the household to be educated on coyote attractants, yard audits, and pet safety information. City will may contact the Department of Fish and Wildlife for removal.
Coyote following or approaching a person and pet (stalking)	4 - Encounter / Attack	The City provides information for the resident to be educated on hazing techniques, what-to-do tips, yard/neighborhood audits, and pet safety information. Additionally, the City will work with the residents to eliminate coyote attractants in the area.
Coyote following or approaching a person without a pet (stalking)	4 - Encounter / Attack	The City provides information for the resident to be educated on hazing techniques, what-to-do tips, yard/neighborhood audits, and pet safety information. Additionally, the City will work with residents and local groups to eliminate coyote attractants in the area.
Coyote biting or injuring a human	4 - Encounter / Attack	Person should seek medical attention. The City informs the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Residents will receive educational materials on coyote attractants, yard or neighborhood audits, hazing, and pet safety. Additionally, the City will send out mailers, partner with external stakeholders to host trainings and workshops, conduct a community meeting/town hall, and encourage the cities in the subregion to work with community groups to eliminate coyote attractants.



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