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Coyote Response Guide

INTRODUCTION

An effective wildlife management strategy must balance the needs of wildlife with those of the public. Protection of life and property is a priority, along with appropriate management of the coyote population.

This guide provides a standard approach in deciding coyote management responses. It is a resource for government staff who must act in situations of conflict where clear, concise and consistent direction is needed. The guide is the result of collaboration among biologists, enforcement officers, and problem wildlife specialists. Except in national parks, this guide will apply to specific events involving coyotes throughout the province, including lands within provincial parks and protected areas. The guide is reviewed annually and revised as required.

The guide also shows Albertans how human/coyote incidents will be handled. Staff will use the guide as a reference to communicate with stakeholders and the public about managing human/coyote conflicts and to promote public and community support for coyote management.

PREVENTATIVE ACTION

Preventative action is the first response in most situations where a coyote has not presented an immediate threat to humans.

Preventative actions include:

- Assess situation/monitor;
- Close area to public access;
- Educate by providing information on wildlife behaviour and presence;
- Remove or order removal of attractants;
- Move pets and livestock to shelter and/or increase animal husbandry actions;
- Fencing;
- Use of deterrents or scaring devices;
- Aversive conditioning;
- Hunting;
- Lethal control.

Coyotes may be controlled through legal lethal methods on private lands throughout the year. Other opportunities to manage coyote populations include trapping and hunting with lawful techniques and seasons.

Often, preventative actions may be sufficient to prevent future incidents. For example, if a coyote is frequenting residential areas in search of food, providing secure storage for garbage will effectively eliminate these easy food sources. Preventative actions are often the appropriate first response.

USING THE GUIDE

If preventative actions have proven insufficient and control actions are deemed necessary, this guide will be used to determine the appropriate response. The guide relies on the results of an incident investigation along with assessing the coyote's age/sex classification and behaviour to enable staff to determine an appropriate response option for a coyote conflict incident. Coyotes have known behavioural patterns that, when combined with location, time and other factors, may indicate an incident is probable. It is unlikely however that the guide anticipates all possible situations. Where situations do not fall cleanly within the guide, staff will make decisions that most closely follow the guide.

INVESTIGATION

Depending on the location, reports of human/coyote conflict or property damage may be investigated by the police of jurisdiction, trained municipal or provincial government staff. Coyotes are classified as a pest through the *Agricultural Pests Act* and rural municipalities are the designated authority responsible for control of problem coyote incidents that do not involve public safety. Additional support, control tools and resources may be available from urban municipalities.

The aim of the investigation is to collect evidence, including witness reports and physical evidence that will provide an accurate account of the coyote's actions, as well as any human activity involved.

CLASSIFICATION

Three main factors are used to help determine an appropriate response to human/coyote conflict or property damage. They include the age, sex, and family status of the animal (female with pups, orphan, etc.), the animal's behaviour and location of the incident.

For incidents on provincial land or on other lands a municipal authority, a Fish and Wildlife Officer or, in Provincial Parks, a Conservation Officer or Ecologist, will make these determinations based on evidence

collected during an investigation, and may call upon other technical experts to assist with the evaluation. The subsequent response will be based on these factors as outlined in the guide.

The following age-based descriptions are used to classify the type of coyote involved in an incident:

- Pup: < 12 months
- Orphan Pup: < 12 months not accompanied by adult
- Adult: > 12 months

A coyote is further classified based on its behaviour:

- **Habituated:** A habituated coyote shows little or no perceived reaction to people. This is an animal whose presence could be interpreted as, or lead to a public safety risk. Coyotes that frequent developed areas or areas of high human use such as urban areas immediately adjacent to natural escape habitat, rural residences, campgrounds, or ranch yards while in search of natural foods may be habituated. Preventative actions should be used on coyotes classified as habituated.
- **Food-conditioned:** A coyote that feeds on unnatural foods and frequents or remains in human-frequented areas.
- **Depredation:** A depredation coyote has attacked, killed, or is an immediate threat to a pet or livestock animal.
- **Offender:** An offender coyote is one that presents an apparent threat to human safety or has had contact with a human after being provoked (i.e. the coyote's actions were the result of, or response to, actions by the human). An offender coyote will not always require capture, for example if the coyote's response was defensive in nature and the contact was not prolonged. The location of the incident will be a major component in the decision.
- **Predator:** A predator coyote is one that has killed a human and either fed upon or has stalked, pursued, chased or ambushed a human (unprovoked) resulting in coyote/human contact, whether or not the victim was killed or injured. If the predator coyote has young, then all members of the family group will be classified as predator.

RESPONSE

Provincial government staff respond primarily to incidents of public safety. If a coyote needs to be captured by trap, snare, immobilization or other means it will be done in accordance with the established departmental standards and procedures. Coordination with local by-law or police of jurisdiction may be required. The following chart identifies the types of responses based on the age and behaviour of the coyote.

All euthanasia will follow the Canada Council on Animal Care Guidelines.

COYOTE RESPONSE CHART

**PREVENTATIVE ACTION WILL BE THE INITIAL RESPONSE BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE TO CAPTURE (see above)
THE RESPONSE CHART RELATES TO COYOTES CAPTURED AS THE RESULT OF A CONFLICT INCIDENT**

BEHAVIOUR RANK	HABITUATED / FOOD CONDITIONED	DEPREDAATION	OFFENDER/ PREDATOR
HISTORY RANK	1	1	1
COYOTE TYPE			
All Age Classes	EU	EU	EU
RESPONSE TYPE EU- Euthanasia			

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