FAIRFAX COUNTY WILDLIFE

COYOTES AND PET SAFETY

Coyotes are part of the local wildlife community and are well-established throughout Fairfax County, including parks and residential neighborhoods.

Coyotes play an important role as natural predators in the environment that help control rodents and other wildlife, but can pose a risk to pets.

While dangerous conflict between pets and coyotes is rare, pet owners should be aware of the risk and take steps to reduce the chance of encounters with coyotes.

Most incidents between coyotes and pets in Fairfax County involve unattended dogs, dogs that are not on a leash and are running loose, and cats that are allowed to free roam.

As members of the canine family, coyotes are territorial and may view large dogs as competition or a threat. Coyotes may also consider small pets including cats and small dogs as prey due to their similar size to natural wildlife prey.

Conflicts with coyotes can happen year-round but are more likely during coyote mating season (January-March) and when coyotes are protecting their pups (March-August).

Keeping pets safe is crucial with coyotes present in our area. Learn the ways to reduce conflicts with coyotes and ensure a safe environment for people, pets, and wildlife.

FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT SECTION

PET SAFETY TIPS

- Do not leave pets outside unattended.

- Obey the Fairfax County leash law (§ 41.1-2-4. Unrestricted dogs prohibited; leash law.).

- Walk dogs on a short leash (6-feet long or less) to maintain close control of your dog and make coyotes aware of your presence. Longer or retractable leashes allow greater distance and little time to react if a coyote encounter occurs.

- Carry a walking stick or noisemaker to use as a scare device such as a whistle, small air horn, or “coyote rattler” when walking outdoors.

- Do not let your dog approach, chase, or attempt to “play” with a coyote.

- Avoid areas known to have coyote activity, especially during breeding and pupping season. Alter your route if coyotes are reported in the area.

- Stay on trails and be extra careful when walking in wooded areas or areas with thick brush.

- Keep cats indoors and do not allow to roam free.

- Keep pets up-to-date on all vaccinations.

- Remove food sources and never feed coyotes. Keep pet food inside or in a secure bin.

Fairfax County Police - Wildlife Section
8855 Lorton Road, Lorton, VA 22079
703-246-6868

Animal Control Dispatch 703-691-2131
(for sick or injured wildlife)

Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
& USDA Wildlife Services
855-571-9003 (toll-free)

Fairfax County Police Department – Wildlife Management Section
(703) 246-6868 TTY 711