



MASSWILDLIFE

DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

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[MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE](https://www.mass.gov/masswildlife)

Coyote Information for Massachusetts Town Webpages and Social Media

Town officials are encouraged to copy and use the following content to communicate information about coyotes on town webpages and/or social media accounts.

General Coyote Information

Coyotes can be found in nearly every town and city in Massachusetts. They are adaptable to a wide range of habitats, including suburban, urban, and rural areas. Coyotes are an important and valuable natural resource in Massachusetts, and we encourage residents to work towards coexistence with coyotes to effectively mitigate coyote issues.

Coyote Important Life Events

Coyote visibility and behavior can change throughout the year during different biological periods. These periods can influence coyote behavior, activity, and aggression levels. Coyotes can be more aggressive toward dogs during mating season (Jan – March) and denning, or pup rearing, season (April – May). This is natural behavior and the same way a coyote would respond to the presence of another coyote during these periods.

1. Coyote Mating Season

Late January through early March is the mating season for coyotes. During this time of year, coyotes become more active and there is often a peak in aggressive behavior toward dogs. The public can prevent conflicts with coyotes by protecting pets, removing human-associated food sources, and hazing.

2. Coyote Denning Season

Coyote pups are born between April - May. Coyotes average about 6 pups per litter and are weaned after 35 days. Coyote pups emerge from their dens in June and start to learn to hunt and forage with their family group. Adult coyotes can be very protective of the area around their den and more aggressive toward dogs during this time. Coyotes mostly den in natural places, including hollowed out tree stumps, in rocky areas, and in burrows made by other animals, but they can den in thick brush or under structures as well.

Preventing Future Conflicts with Coyotes

Everyone has a role to play in preventing conflict with coyotes and limiting the development of aggressive behaviors in coyote. There are three main ways to prevent conflicts with coyotes: remove all human-associated food sources, aggressively haze coyotes, and protect pets.

1. Human-associated foods

Food around our homes, neighborhoods, and businesses can attract coyotes to these areas. It essentially trains coyotes and other wildlife to come around our homes to look for food, which increases the chance of encounters with people and pets. It also supplements natural foods and

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allows coyotes to exist at higher densities than they would be able to otherwise. Removing and securing foods around our homes and businesses is essential. Human-associated foods include bird feeders, garbage (household and dumpsters), unsecured compost, fruit trees with fallen fruit, pets being fed outside, and people feeding strays. Removing these foods will remove the attractant from our homes and decreases the food supplementing the coyotes' diet.

Most importantly, no one should ever intentionally feed coyotes. Coyotes that are fed by people start to associate people with food. This can cause them to lose their fear of people and to approach people to look for food and develop other bold behaviors. Despite still being very rare events, most of the recent bites of humans in Massachusetts have occurred in places where it was confirmed someone was intentionally feeding coyotes prior to the incident. It is almost never the person feeding that is bitten, but someone else in the community. Never intentionally feed wildlife.

2. Hazing

Coyotes and other wildlife are inherently afraid of people. Over time, that fear can diminish with greater levels of positive or neutral interactions with people. Coyotes in urban and suburban areas spend their entire lives close to people. They see people daily and are near homes, cars, and other parts of modern society. As a result, the sights and sounds of developed areas become familiar to them. In many instances, if a person encounters a coyote, the person runs away, jumps in a car, or quickly ducks inside. These are submissive behaviors that teach coyotes that they are dominant in their relationship with people. Coyotes who repeatedly experience these submissive interactions can develop bolder behaviors. To reverse and prevent this, people need to act aggressively towards coyotes.

Hazing coyotes teaches them to be fearful and cautious around people. Every time someone sees a coyote, they should attempt to haze the animal. If a coyote is in your yard, aggressively chase it away. You can run at the coyote, wave your arms, yell and scream, or make other loud noises (banging pots and pans, blowing a pocket-sized airhorn, etc.), and chase it out of the yard. You can spray a hose and throw small objects, like a tennis ball or very small stones, with the intent to frighten but not injure the animal. Anything you can think of to scare and drive it away. It is important to note that yelling from a distance can be counterproductive.

Hazing should be done every time a coyote is seen and by as many people as possible. The more people in the community that haze, the more effective it will be. Over time, the coyotes that were comfortable around people will become less so.

3. Pets

The greatest source of conflict with coyotes is with pets. Unfortunately, coyotes do not distinguish between our pets and wild animals they encounter. To them the pets are just another animal in the environment, some are seen as prey and others as competitors. Coyotes are territorial animals, and a coyote family group defends their territory against other coyotes. They interpret medium and large size dogs in their territory as threats, particularly during the winter mating season (Jan - March) and when they have pups in the den (April - June).

To protect your pets, cats should be kept inside, and dogs should always be supervised outdoors. Just like cats eat other animals when outside, there are animals larger than them that will eat or kill cats if left outside. The only way to protect cats is to keep them inside. Dogs should be leashed and directly supervised at all times. Dogs that are off leash or alone in a backyard are far more likely to be attacked by a coyote. It is the presence of the person on the other end of the leash that will prevent a coyote from attacking a dog. This is linked to hazing. If coyotes are regularly hazed by people, coyotes will be less willing to approach or attack a dog on a leash.

People often express fear of walking dogs or being outside if there have been coyote incidents or sightings in town. It is important to keep in mind that people are doing these things every day in Massachusetts with relatively few incidents occurring with coyotes, despite coyotes living everywhere in the state. A walking stick can be used to frighten a coyote off or, in an extreme situation, it can be used to fend off an aggressive coyote. A person can also carry a dog friendly spray repellent (citronella) or pepper spray and use it to scare away a coyote. These products are designed to be easily carried on a belt and provide a good deterrent or defense should a coyote be encountered.

This information is provided by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife). For more information about coyotes, please visit [mass.gov/coyotes](https://www.mass.gov/coyotes).