



## **Coyote Management Plan Wheat Ridge, Colorado**

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## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for responses to different types of interactions and/or conflicts with coyotes; and to resolve and reduce human-coyote conflicts within the City in a consistent and expedient manner. Public safety is the main concern of the City of Wheat Ridge, and coyotes will be managed with human safety as the priority. The City utilizes educational outreach as the primary tool in managing human-coyote conflicts, but recognizes that there are situations where immediate lethal control may be necessary.

The coyote is an extremely adaptable animal, and has thrived in urban settings for many years, with the abundance of food, water and space being plentiful within the parks and open spaces. As the coyote has adapted to the urban environment, their fear of humans has diminished. It is important for our community to work together to re-instill a natural fear of humans back into the coyote population with undesirable attention.

The City of Wheat Ridge, in cooperation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, developed this Coyote Management Plan. The Plan includes a variety of educational pieces and techniques and that have been proven to be successful in the management of human-coyote conflicts.

## II. RESPONSIBILITY

The Wheat Ridge Police Department's Community Service Officers (CSOs) and Parks Department will be responsible for the following:

1. CSO's will respond and document all reported activities and conflicts with coyotes within the City of Wheat Ridge in a Police report and act as the repository for those reports. When appropriate, and according to the Guidelines for Response, CSOs will distribute these reports to the Chief of Police, the Parks Department, Jefferson County Public Health (JCPH), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and to other pertinent agencies for public safety and record keeping purposes.
2. The Police Department will provide press release notifications to the public regarding coyotes that may pose a threat to the safety of the public.
3. The Police Department and the Parks Department will be responsible to provide educational information on coyote conflicts via the City website, Channel 8, CPW brochures, Park kiosks, temporary signage, neighborhood mailings, and public meetings.
4. The Parks Department staff will monitor coyote activities in the parks and open spaces and report human-coyote encounters, conflicts, and pet attacks to the CSO's via the Police Department's Communications Center. Human-coyote incidents or attacks that occur on City Parks Department property will require immediate notification to the Police Department's Communications Center, CSO's and CPW.
5. CSOs and the Animal Control and Welfare Commission will consult with JCPH on all issues relating to coyote bites to humans and pet exposures which require the quarantine of animals.

6. CPW will provide guidance and education to landowners and local jurisdictions in managing nuisance coyotes.
7. Subsequent to CSOs response and determination that a coyote has exhibited behavior creating an unsafe situation for the human, CPW personnel will respond and make a lethal control decision based on the interest of public safety.

### **III. DEFINITIONS OF COYOTE INTERACTIONS**

Terms and definitions are not subject to editing or change. These terms have been provided by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and are currently being used to describe coyote behaviors and incidents throughout the State of Colorado.

1. Observation - The act of noticing or taking note of tracks, scat or vocalizations.
2. Sighting - A visual observation of a coyote(s).
3. Encounter - An unexpected direct meeting between a human and a coyote without incident.
4. Incident – A conflict between a human and a coyote where a coyote exhibited behavior creating an unsafe situation for the human.
5. Pet Attack - When a pet or livestock animal is attacked, injured or killed by a coyote. Pet animals are considered to be a domesticated or tame animal, such as a dog or cat. Livestock animals are considered to be animals that are generally regarded as farm or ranch animals, such as horses, cows, pigs, poultry and many other various types of farm related animals.
6. Attack - An attack is when a human is bodily injured or killed by a coyote.

### **IV. GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSE TO INTERACTIONS**

1. CSOs will respond to all types of coyote interactions, and document the interaction in a Police report.  
In the event of an Attack, a Police Officer will also respond.
2. When responding to an Observation, Sighting, and Encounter, CSO's will provide the reporting party with educational information on coyotes and refer them to the City website for further information on coyote behaviors and deterrents.  
In the event of an Incident, CPW will provide instruction on low intensity hazing of coyotes.
3. In all types of interactions, CSOs will assess the situation, and if appropriate, mail educational postcards on "Coyote Conflicts" to the neighborhood or area where the interaction occurred.
4. When responding to an Incident, Pet Attack, or Attack, CSOs will immediately notify CPW and request response to the area to determine if immediate lethal control measures are appropriate.

5. When documenting an Incident, Pet Attack or Attack, CSO's will distribute the report to the Chief of Police and CPW.  
  
CSOs will also distribute this report to the Parks Department if the event occurred in the Parks or Open Space. If the interaction occurred in or adjacent to City Parks or Open Space, the Parks Department will post temporary educational signage in the area.
6. The Police Department will provide press release notifications to the public regarding an Incident, Pet Attack, or Attack, as the coyote may pose a further threat to the safety of the public, pets or livestock.
7. In the event of an Incident or Pet Attack, a low intensity hazing program will be initiated. Police staff will be notified of the location, times and dates the hazing will occur. CPW will provide on-site public education programs in the area on hazing and the habits and behaviors of the coyote.  
  
In the case of an Attack, a high intensity hazing will be initiated.  
  
CSOs will continue to monitor the area, provide directed patrols, and update any previous press release notifications to the public.
8. In the event of a Pet Attack or Attack, Jefferson County Public Health and the Animal Control and Welfare Commission will be notified and consulted on the quarantine or exposure of pets or livestock animals.

## **V. DEFINITIONS OF COYOTE BEHAVIOR**

### **1. Nuisance Coyote**

A coyote may be defined as a nuisance using the following guidelines:

- A. Habituated - A coyote that appears to frequently associate with humans or human related food sources, and exhibits little wariness of the presence of people.
- B. Depredating - A coyote that is preying on pets or livestock.
- C. Menacing - A coyote that exhibits aggravated territorial or predatory behavior towards people, but that does not qualify it as a Dangerous coyote. This may include coyote incidents and/or encounters that were serious in nature or a coyote or group of coyotes that could potentially endanger human safety.

### **2. Dangerous Coyote**

A coyote may be defined as dangerous using the following guidelines:

- A. A coyote that has attacked or is attacking a person.
- B. A coyote that exhibits aggressive behavior towards a human(s) and/or poses a significant threat to human safety.
- C. CSOs will consult with CPW if they believe that a coyote may be dangerous based on a totality of behaviors and/or locations.

**VI. DEFINITIONS OF RESPONSES**

1. Hazing – An activity, or series of activities used in an attempt to change coyote behaviors or deter habituated coyotes, or to establish or maintain a healthy awareness on humans in local coyote populations.
2. Low Intensity Hazing - Low intensity hazing can be performed by everyone at the community level by:
  - A. Yelling and clapping
  - B. Banging pots and pans together
  - C. Throwing rocks or sticks
  - D. Spraying with garden hoses, water guns and sprinklers
  - E. Utilizing noise making devices, (air horns, whistles, cans filled with beans or pennies, etc.) Contact the Parks Department for information on available hazing supplies.
  - F. Motion sensor sprinkler systems
  - G. Utilizing deterrent sprays
3. High Intensity Hazing - High intensity hazing should only be performed by trained individuals. High intensity hazing can be conducted in areas with reported human encounters or incidents, where coyotes are approaching residents, where there are routine pet attacks, or based on the totality of circumstances and may include immediate lethal control.

**VII. GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSE TO NUISANCE AND DANGEROUS COYOTES**

1. CSOs will respond to the encounter location and document the encounter in a Police report.

In the event of a Dangerous encounter, a Police Officer will also respond, and CPW notified to respond, and the Police report will be distributed to the Chief of Police, CPW, and the Parks Department (if the incident is located in Park or Open Space area). If the encounter occurred in or adjacent to City Parks or Open Space, the Parks Department will post temporary educational signage in the area
2. The Police Department will provide press release notifications to the public regarding the encounter.
3. CSOs will provide educational materials to the reporting party and refer the party to the city website/animal control/CPW link for further information on conflicts with wildlife.
4. In the event of a nuisance coyote, CSOs will consult with CPW on initiating a hazing program and providing on-site public education.

In the event of a Dangerous coyote encounter, a High Intensity Hazing program will be initiated. Police staff will be notified of the location, times and dates the hazing will occur. CPW will provide on-site public education programs in the area on hazing and the habits and behaviors of the coyote.
5. CSOs will continue to monitor the area, provide directed patrols, and update any previous press release notifications to the public.

## Coyote Management Plan Wheat Ridge, Colorado

August 28, 2013

Page 6

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6. CSOs will follow up by mailing educational postcards on “Coyote Conflicts” to the neighborhood or area where the encounter occurred.
7. If the encounter is with a Dangerous coyote, CSOs will consult with CPW to determine if lethal control is appropriate.

### VIII. AUTHORITY

1. Colorado Revised Statutes. Title 33, Wildlife and Parks and Outdoor Recreation

33-1-106 gives the Wildlife Commission the authority to regulate the circumstances under which wildlife may be taken, and to determine the disposition of usable portions of wildlife.

- A. 33-1-105(1)(h) gives the Wildlife Commission the authority to provide for destruction of any wildlife that poses a threat to public health, safety, or welfare.
- B. 33-6-107(9) permits any person, any member of such person’s family, or any employee of the person to hunt, trap, or take coyotes on land owned or leased by the person without securing licenses to do so, but only when such wildlife is causing damage to crops, real or personal property, or livestock.
- C. Wildlife Commission Regulation 303 (A) prohibits the relocation of coyotes without a permit. Studies have shown that relocation is not an effective solution to coyote conflicts. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) generally will not authorize the relocation of coyotes.
- D. 33-6-205 gives federal, state, county or municipal departments of health the ability to grant an exemption to Amendment 14 to take (by use of leg hold traps, snares, instant kill body-gripping design traps or poisons) wildlife for the purpose of protecting human health and safety.
- E. 33-6-207 gives CPW and the Department of Agriculture the authority to adopt and enforce reasonable rules governing trapping, snaring and poisoning for landowners’ protection of crops and livestock. (This is an exemption under Amendment 14).

2. City of Wheat Ridge Municipal Code

Sec. 16-64. - Protection of Wildlife.

- (a) *Shooting, capturing, etc., prohibited.* Except as otherwise provided in this section, it is unlawful to willfully shoot, capture, harass, injure or destroy any wild bird or animal or to attempt to shoot, capture, harass, injure or destroy any such wild bird or animal anywhere within this city.
- (b) *Disturbing, etc., nests, burrows, etc., prohibited.* No person shall willfully destroy, rob or disturb the nest, nesting place, burrow, eggs or young of any wild bird or animal anywhere within this city.
- (c) *Terms defined.* In this section:

- (1) *Wild bird* includes all undomesticated birds native to North America and undomesticated game birds implanted in North America by governmental agencies and any domestic duck or goose released by any private person or recreational authority upon any recreational area within this city.
  - (2) *Wild animal* includes any animal native to the state, but does not include rattlesnakes, fish, Norway rats or common house mice.
  - (3) *Humane trap* includes any trap which does not cause physical injury, pain or suffering of a trapped animal. Steel-jaw leg hold traps and snares are specifically excluded from this definition, but the city shall not be precluded from determining that any other type of trap is also excluded from this definition.
  - (4) *Causing damage on land*, as provided herein, shall mean physical injury to buildings or improvements or destruction or injury of domestic animals or pets lawfully kept thereon.
- (d) *Application to city and state employees.* The provisions of this section shall apply to the personnel of any police, fire or animal control agency or to the state division of wildlife or department of health or other state or federal agency, and all City of Wheat Ridge employees when such persons are acting within the scope of their official duties as employees of such agencies.
  - (e) *State-protected birds and animals.* The provisions of this section are not intended to allow the destruction of any bird or animal protected by state or federal law.
  - (f) *When trapping permitted.* If any wild bird or animal is causing damage on lands within the city owned or leased by any person, such person or any member of his family, or his agent, may trap such wild bird or animal, subject to the provisions of this section.
  - (g) *Provisions for trapping.* Trapping of animals shall follow the provisions set out below:
    - (1) When deemed necessary by police officers or the community service officer for the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the city, such officers and/or their agents may place a humane trap on city property or other property within the city when the property owner requests such humane trap for the purpose of capturing any wild or pet animal creating a nuisance in the city. Provided, however, that no trap of any kind shall be set upon any property without notification to and/or permission from the owner of such property.
    - (2) Any person who traps an animal pursuant to the provisions of this section shall immediately notify police department of such trapping. The police department shall have the

exclusive right and authority to determine the disposition of any such trapped animal.

(3) Community service officers are authorized to use any tranquilizer guns, firearms, humane traps or other suitable devices to subdue or destroy any animal that is deemed by the community service officer, in his discretion, to be a danger to itself or to the public health and safety.

(4) It shall be unlawful for any person to set or cause to be set within the city any steel-jaw leg-hold trap, snare or any trap other than a humane trap, for the purpose of capturing any animal, whether wild or domestic.

(h) It is unlawful to feed fox and coyote.

*(Code 1977, § 14-41; Ord. No. 1993-923, §§ 1, 2, 4-12-93; Ord. No. 1994-961, §§ 1—4, 4-25-94; Ord. No. 1329, § 2, 7-26-04; Ord. No. 1373, § 1, 10-10-06)*

*State law reference— Wildlife, parks and outdoor recreation, C.R.S. § 33-1-101 et seq.; cruelty to animals, C.R.S. § 18-9-202.*

3. Wheat Ridge Police Department Policy Directive Manual

13.05.06 THREAT MAINTENANCE

A. The removal or euthanization of an animal will occur after consultation with the Patrol Watch Commander, Community Services Team Supervisor and Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials.

B. Whenever possible, animals will be removed per Colorado Parks and Wildlife policy, alive from populated areas if safe and reasonable to do so.

C. When euthanization is to occur on scene, the most appropriate and humane means will be deployed. The Patrol Watch Commander, Community Services Supervisor and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, will decide whether it is appropriate to wait for Colorado Parks and Wildlife officials to respond, or whether circumstances require immediate action.

D. When humane traps are used, it is the intent of the department for officers to monitor them at frequent intervals, barring any other law enforcement emergency calls for service or critical staffing issues, to ensure that trapped animals are not subjected to extended periods of time in a confined state.

E. If practical and available, electronic means of monitoring humane traps can be used.



## **IX. Summary**

The wildlife management section addressed within the Open Space Management Plan of 2002's intent was to be broad and inclusive. This Coyote Management Plan addresses the specifics of managing one species, the coyote.

There are many other species of wildlife that make Wheat Ridge their home and not just in the confines of our preserved Open Space areas. It is recognized that wildlife issues can be complex and challenging; and living conflict-free with all species would be our ultimate goal. The human inhabitants and visitors to our community and our city's activities can help or exacerbate wildlife encounters and problems. Human inhabitants of the City need to take some responsibility to curb our behavior that can lead to conflicts, such as unconscious and conscious feeding, careless rubbish disposal and responsible pet guardianship.

### Appendixes:

1. Educational Outreach Tools
  - a. Examples: brochures, mailings, newsletters, PSAs, signs, websites, education in schools, etc. (CPW can provide many of these tools for distribution.)
2. Hazing Methods
  - a. Tools for Residents on their Property
    - i. Examples: rocks and sticks, noisemakers, garden hoses, water guns, deterrent sprays, motion sprinklers, etc.
  - b. City Hazing Programs
    - i. Examples: paintball, Department approved pepper spray/low and high intensity hazing
3. Lethal Methods
  - a. Options for Residents on their Property
  - b. City and/or Cooperating County Lethal Control Program(s)