

## **Feeding Coyotes In Orland Park Is Illegal** *Never Leave Family Pets Unattended Outside*

ORLAND PARK, IL - Coyotes have been in the Orland Park area since the late 70s when they used area railroad tracks as highways to Chicago's south suburbs. The current population is growing because coyotes have no natural predators. They are the number one killer of white-tailed deer fawns.

"Coyotes look like German Shepherds and, at this time of the year, they look very large because their winter coats are in," explained Orland Park Police Animal Control Officer Steve Stronk. "When they're wet, they look like a 40 pound dog," he added.

It is not uncommon to see coyotes in packs of as many as eight. The coyotes' breeding time is normally in February and March with their pups being born in the spring, April and May, after 60 to 63 days of gestation. Coyotes can have anywhere from five to seven pups in a litter.

"Most coyotes feed on rabbits and mice but they'll never pass up a free meal," Stronk noted. "They do eat bird seed and all other animals and birds that feed on the seed," he explained. Stronk recommends that residents who feed birds and see coyotes in the area should stop feeding the birds for at least a month.

"The Police Department knows of Orland Park residents who --- despite our repeated warnings --- have been feeding coyotes," Stronk lamented. "This is one of the reasons why coyotes are losing their fear of humans," he added.

It is illegal to ground feed any animals or birds in the Village of Orland Park.

"We cannot stress enough that people should not feed any wildlife in Orland Park. They must let Mother Nature take its course and let these animals forage for their own food. Whether it's the geese at the ponds, coyotes, raccoons, deer in your backyard or any other type of wildlife, do not feed them," Stronk firmly said.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources records show no documented coyote attacks on humans; however, they will attack family pets.

Residents who encounter a coyote are cautioned to never run from it or take their eyes off of it. "If you run, you could engage a predatory instinct and the coyote could give chase," Stronk explained. Residents who encounter coyotes should yell, scream and wave their arms, making themselves look larger than they actually are.

"If that doesn't work, throw whatever is handy at the coyote or carry an air horn like boaters use," Strong suggested, adding, "An air horn should make them leave in a hurry."

Residents are encouraged to always carry a cell phone when out walking or walking their dogs. "Take your cell phone with you so you can call for help," Stronk recommended.

Walkers are also encouraged to go to the nearest house for help and ask that the homeowner call 9-1-1 so that a police officer can respond.

“I cannot stress enough the importance of never, ever leaving your family dog or cat to wander alone or unattended outside,” Stronk said. “This is when coyotes have attacked, when they come upon defenseless family pets outside by themselves,” he added. “Do not leave your family pets unattended outside,” Stronk emphasized.

Orland Park is surrounded by forest preserves and the village will always have wildlife in its environs. “We have deer, muskrats, coyotes, geese and more,” Stronk said, adding, “We can’t choose which animals pass through our yards but there are several things we can do to make them not want to stay.”

“Everyone needs to be careful and pay extra attention when it comes to wildlife, especially when it comes to family pets,” Stronk advised, adding that coyote information packets are available at the Orland Park Police Department, 15100 South Ravinia Avenue.

Residents with additional questions about wildlife in the Village of Orland Park may contact Stronk by calling the Police Department’s non-emergency number, 708/349-4111.