

Posted on: December 20, 2013

Residents Should Be Aware of Coyotes



The Animal Control Unit of the Orland Park Police Department reminds residents to not leave family pets unattended outside because of the increase in coyote activity in the area.

"We're reminding pet owners to be careful when they're outside with their family pets," said Orland Park Police Animal Control Officer Steve Stronk.

Pet owners are warned to be especially cautious during coyote mating season, January through March. During this time, coyotes travel long distances to find suitable mates and require extra calories to carry them on their journey. They then expend extra energy to build dens for pregnant females, who will need to stock up on additional meals. Studies show that coyotes are particularly aggressive during this time.

Residents should not feed any wild animals such as raccoons or deer. Food left for any animals encourages coyotes to remain in the area. Trash cans should be well secured and residents should never add meat scraps to compost piles.

"Feeding wild animals disrupts the course of nature because these animals become dependent on humans," Stronk said. "They need to forage for themselves and find their own food. That's how nature works," he added.

Outside animal feeding containers are discouraged. Coyotes will prey on small mammals that are attracted to birdseed and pet food.

"Don't leave your dog's bowl of food outside. You're asking for visitors when you leave easily accessible food outside," Stronk said.

Family pets should never be allowed to run free, especially at night. Dogs running free attract the attention of coyotes. They should be walked on a leash and an adult should be outside with them. Cats should be kept indoors, especially at night.

"Even if you have a fenced yard, you should still be outside with your dogs. Turn on the lights. Make noise and let any coyotes in the area know that you're there," Stronk said.

According to the Cook County, Illinois Coyote Project, 60% of recent attacks were on smaller breeds such as Yorkshire Terriers, Shih Tzus and Jack Russells.

"While you'd think that small dogs would be easy targets for coyotes, they have attacked larger breeds like Labradors and German Shepherds, especially if they're traveling in a pack," Stronk said.

The Cook County, Illinois Coyote Project researched animal attacks on humans and found almost half of the attacks occurring in California with a large portion in Arizona. The project

did not find any records of attacks on humans within the Chicago metropolitan area or within the State of Illinois.

"Coyotes are most active in the dawn and dusk hours," Stronk said. "We encourage people to reinforce the coyotes' natural fear of humans," he said. "Turn on outside lights. Make loud noises, throw rocks and so forth. You want to be aggressive in your actions so the coyotes run away," Stronk said.

Further information about the Cook County Coyote Project can be found at urbancoyotereseach.com.