Living With Coyotes in Hillsborough

The Hillsborough Township Health Department has been receiving an increasing number of complaints and concerns regarding the presence of coyotes on residents’ property. This is a result of a large migration coming from the western part of the country. In Hillsborough, coyotes can be seen in residential neighborhoods in search of prey or easy food, such as leftover food in the garbage.

Background Information On Coyotes

- Coyotes are native to most environments in North America, including urban communities.
- Coyotes are wild canines that range in size from 30 to 50 pounds.
- Coyotes are most active at night and in the morning.
- Being an opportunistic species, coyotes feed on a wide variety of foods. In Hillsborough, they prey on rodents, rabbits, deer, waterfowl, poultry and free-ranging pets. They also eat fruits, garbage and pet food.
- Coyotes are known to carry the Rabies virus.
- Attacks on small dogs or cats are common, though attacks on humans are rare, however increasing in occasion.

Control Methods

There are various methods to dissuade a coyote from vandalizing or attacking your property. Listed below are ways to prevent coyotes from becoming property pests. If a coyote is identified in your neighborhood, make sure to keep an eye on it. If the coyote is scoping the area for more than a few days, then it may be strategizing for an attack, waiting to seize a vulnerable opportunity.

Prevent Coyotes from attacking your pets

- Feed your pets indoors. (If you must feed them outdoors, do not leave the food dishes outside)
- Store food indoors or in an animal-proof container.
- Keep your dog on a leash and in open, well-lit areas.
- Light-up your yard at night.

Prevent Coyotes from attacking children/people

- Do not leave your children unattended in the yard.
- Teach children to identify a coyote as opposed to a dog.
- If being followed or tracked by a coyote, do not run, or turn your back to it. (This sets up the attack) Act aggressively by shouting, waiving your arms and throwing objects at it. Pepper spray and blow horns work effectively as well.
- Report aggressively acting coyote to the local Police Department or the Health Department.

Remember that coyotes are wild animals, and you should keep your distance from them regardless of their health or behavioral status. Although an attack from a healthy animal is rare, it may occur. In the event where contact is made, (bitten or scratched) clean the area with soap and water, and consult your doctor as soon as possible, followed by the Hillsborough Health Department and the Police Department. This includes situations where no obvious injuries are sustained.
If your pet comes into contact with a sick or potentially rabid coyote, consult your veterinarian immediately. If contact with your pet can be avoided, do so. If not, handle your pet using gloves and protective clothing, as to stop the spread of the disease. The rabies virus does need a host to survive but can remain on hair, skin, and saliva for up to two hours.

If coyotes cause any severe damage to pets or livestock, or pose a threat to public health and safety, then methods of control can be implemented through trapping or hunting in-season. If it is out of season, then the Fish, Game and Wildlife Agency can issue a permit for trapping a professional nuisance wildlife trapper.

The link for the Fish, Game and Wildlife Agency is https://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/

Another good link for dealing with local property pests is https://wildlifehelp.org/