

“No Dog-walker Left Behind”: please let’s get this information out to all dog owners!

# How To Handle A Coyote Encounter: A Primer



## Quick Summary for Dog Walkers

- Always be VIGILANT and AWARE when you are out walking your pet.
- Practice TOTAL AVOIDANCE, whether you see a coyote far away, at a mid-range distance, or coming in close to you, by calmly tightening your leash and walking in the other direction —keeping your eye on the coyote may discourage it from approaching further.
- Do not run. Stay calm and collected.
- Always pick up a small dog and walk away calmly.
- Learning about coyote behaviors and the “why” behind their behaviors will help you lose your fears. Watch “Coyotes As Neighbors” on YouTube.

**Footnote: Understanding Some Coyote Behaviors.** *“Habituation is something that naturally occurs in all animals. It’s a simple orienting behavior towards things that are new in their environment, whether it’s a sound, smell, something visible or another species. After a period of exposure, they stop responding. For example: Coyotes no longer pay attention to other species in their environment that turn out not to be predators or competitors. This is why coyotes tolerate human presence so readily in urban areas, but also it is why bazing often does not work — they get used to it.*

*Conditioning is a learned behavior. You can condition a coyote to come by your house by intentionally feeding it. A coyote conditioned to being hand-fed may approach people who are holding food. Feeding trains coyotes to approach people. Please don’t feed coyotes! It can be reversed, but why go there to begin with?*

*Much literature states that a habituated coyote is dangerous. Hardly! A coyote habituated to human presence will ignore you, and not react to you as though you were a threat. Habituated animals that are not human-food conditioned are safer to be around, because they are aware of your presence and will not be spooked and become defensive.*

*Aggression is a FEAR-based response. Coyotes will be defensive/aggressive when guarding pups or their space. Avoid an altercation by turning and going the other way.*

[flyer designed by Janet Kessler with [coyotecoexistence.com](http://coyotecoexistence.com)]



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Have questions or need help? Contact us at: [coyotecoexistence@gmail.com](mailto:coyotecoexistence@gmail.com)



## Relevant Information

### Normal Coyote Behavior

Although coyotes for the most part stick to the darker hours, it is not unusual to see one out during the daytime, on park trails or on the streets. They like grassy fields where they can hunt, and they like woody areas where they can take refuge. At

times they may pass through our backyards. These are normal coyote behaviors.

We might ask, “Don’t they know they should stay in a park and out of sight?” But how could they possibly know OUR boundaries? Remember that humans delineate their “boundaries” very differently from coyotes: we use physical and visual boundaries which have meaning for us, such as fences and streets, whereas coyotes use olfactory ones which they create by marking or urinating along their territory’s periphery. Most of the time when you see a coyote, it will be hunting in a field for rats or voles, or just passing through. Most of the time, when a coyote sees you, it will flee or keep far away. If a coyote is minding its own business, we try to leave it alone.



### Eliminate Opportunities

Coyotes are known as “opportunistic” eaters -- they eat what they happen to find. You will be inviting them into your yard if there is a food source there, such as pet food or even a small pet if they are easily accessible. There is no way for coyotes to distinguish a small pet from any other form of prey. Do not make your beloved pets a part of the food chain. Always supervise small dogs and keep your cats indoors if coyotes are around.



### Shooing Off a Coyote From A Chance Encounter or From Your Yard

Coyotes want to avoid you as much as you want to avoid them. If a coyote comes within 30-50 feet of you, it will most likely be just an unexpected chance encounter. Coyotes are curious and may stop to observe. This is not an act of aggression. You can avoid the coyote by turning and going in the other direction. However, if you want to trudge on in the coyote’s direction, which we don’t recommend, you may try yelling or stamping your foot, as you approach the coyote -- this may work with some coyotes. Tossing a small stone in the coyote’s direction -- not AT it so as to injure it -- may also cause the coyote to distance itself. If the coyote ignores you and holds its ground, it could indicate pups are around — in this case just leave without causing a confrontation. If a coyote comes to your yard, if you want to scare it off, simply open the door, bang pots, while walking in the coyote’s direction.

## When Walking Your Dog:

### Practice TOTAL AVOIDANCE

A dog walker’s first line of safety in dealing with a coyote should always be **vigilance and awareness**. Leashing in a coyote area is your primary tool for controlling your dog and keeping it away from coyotes.

Then, whether a coyote has been spotted in the distance, is approaching, or suddenly appears right next to you, the \*first line of action\* should always be **total avoidance** -- **not** hazing, which is engagement.

Tighten your leash and walk away from the coyote — keeping your eye on the coyote may discourage it from approaching further. This is an easy protocol to follow, especially for dog-walkers with little or no coyote knowledge or experience, and those who are fearful of coyotes. Simply get your dog away from that coyote — disengage and move away: Total Avoidance.

It’s really not practical or fair to ask elderly people or those who are afraid of coyotes to “haze”/harass them. Walking away -- without running -- accomplishes what is needed: the coyote’s entire intention in approaching is to move you away. So, do it!

Vulnerable smaller dogs which might be viewed as prey should be picked up immediately. If the dog is small enough, tuck it under your shirt or jacket to remove it from view as you walk away from the coyote.

The coyote may end up following you for a little ways as you walk away, but as you distance yourself from its area, he will soon lose interest.

It is especially important not to confront a coyote when pups are around because, like all parents, the coyote will defend its young against your dog.



### If You Have Not Followed Our Recommendations

Prevention is the best policy. If your dog and a coyote get into an altercation, as a last resort, do whatever you think is appropriate to extricate your dog and



leave the area. Scare tactics — such as making eye-contact, lunging at (without getting close), clapping and shouting aggressively at a coyote — do not always work. It’s best to practice prevention proactively than to reactively have to scare off a coyote who comes too close.