



OAKVILLE

News Release

Town of Oakville

Town says public education is key to living with coyotes

Information night helps explain what can be done to prevent conflicts

Oakville, January 21, 2016 – for immediate release

Last night, a packed house at St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School heard about coyote behaviour and what we all need to do to ensure a peaceful coexistence with wildlife in our community.

“Coyotes are part of our natural environment and they are here to stay. We all share responsibility for preventing and managing human-wildlife conflicts. Having the facts helps alleviate some of the fear and helps us to work together to create a safe environment for people and wildlife,” said Cindy Toth, director of Environmental Policy for the Town of Oakville.

According to last night's presenters, which included representatives from the town, Oakville & Milton Humane Society (OMHS), Halton Regional Police Services (HRPS) and the Toronto Wildlife Centre, coyotes are not considered to be a significant risk to people. However, they are wild animals, and feeding coyotes, tolerating them on our property, and allowing pets to roam freely contribute to coyotes losing their inhibitions and fear of people.

Usually wary of humans, many coyotes are currently more visible in some residential areas as they are sick with mange. Coyotes with mange may frequent residential areas to seek easy food and warmth. Mange is not a threat to humans or pets and does not directly lead to increased aggression.

All of the speakers agreed that if embraced by the entire community, these tips can help alleviate conflicts and discourage coyotes from approaching people and private property:

- Never feed a coyote. Ensure garbage, compost and pet food are inaccessible.
- Do not leave food waste in community garbage cans. This encourages coyotes and other wildlife to frequent parks, sidewalks and school grounds to find food.
- Discourage coyotes from entering your property by consistently frightening them away. This is called “hazing”. Use motion sensor lights, spray with a hose, throw sticks or small objects, make lots of noise.
- Do not approach or attempt to tame or let your dog play with a coyote.
- Keep pets on leash as per town by-laws. Supervise them when they are in the yard. Cats should not be permitted to roam freely.
- If you encounter a coyote, waive your arms, shout, and act aggressively towards it. If approached while walking a small dog, pick your dog up and slowly back away while continuing to make loud noise. Do not turn your back on a coyote.
- If a coyote poses an immediate risk to safety, call 911.

The town works with agencies and community partners on a number of initiatives to address community concerns as part of the town's wildlife management strategy; these include:

- Providing a coyote reporting form and mapping feature at oakville.ca to assist the OMHS in monitoring coyote behaviour.
- Posting new signs in areas where coyotes have been sighted.
- Working with Oakvillegreen to provide education to Oakville schools on what to do if a coyote is spotted near a school yard, and how to minimize conflict.
- Collecting town garbage bins on a regular basis to discourage coyotes from feeding. Residents are asked not to dump household garbage into town bins or ravines as this will encourage coyotes to frequent these areas.
- Providing information on oakville.ca for schools and residents on how to coexist with coyotes.
- Continuing hazing practices.

The town also works with HRPS to enforce by-laws put in place to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, such as:

- Keeping pets on leash
- Maintaining property standards
- Preventing illegal household waste in public garbage cans

Currently, the town is working with the OMHS to assist in locating and capturing one particular coyote that has displayed unusual aggressive behaviour over the last few weeks. The coyote has reportedly approached students at Oakville Trafalgar High School and is showing signs of being habituated due to intentional feeding and tolerance. Typically, capturing and relocating coyotes to more than one kilometre away from their habitat is not permitted under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.

HRPS is continuing to monitor the area to ensure safety. The OMHS continues to respond to calls from the public and sightings reported through the town's coyote reporting form.

Residents can report a coyote sighting or discover where coyotes have been sighted through the reporting form and mapping feature at oakville.ca.

For more information on how to co-exist with wildlife, visit oakville.ca.

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