

Solutions for Coyote Conflicts

Why killing doesn't solve conflicts with coyotes

As coyotes have expanded their range across North America, encounters with people have increased. These encounters alarm people who fear for the safety of their pets and children. To allay this fear, communities might feel that they need to pay for wide-scale programs to remove coyotes from the population. However, these killing programs are inhumane—and they don't work. Better solutions exist.

Why don't coyote killing programs work?

They're ineffective.

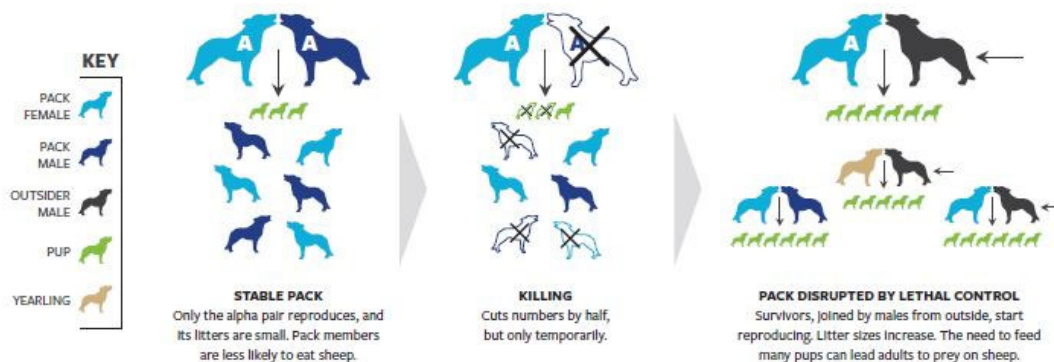
- It's extremely difficult to ensure that the problem-causing coyote(s) will be the one(s) located and killed.
- New coyotes will quickly replace coyotes removed from an area. Coyote pairs hold territories, which leave single coyotes ("floaters") constantly looking for new places to call homeⁱ.
- New coyotes can quickly become "nuisance" coyotes if attractants (e.g., pet food and garbage) aren't removed from a neighborhood.

They won't reduce coyote populations.

- Research suggests that when coyote populations are controlled aggressively, the remaining coyotes often experience a reproductive boom by breeding at earlier ages, having larger litters and experiencing a higher survival rate among the youngⁱⁱ. Therefore, coyote populations bounce back quickly, even when up to 70% of their numbers are removedⁱⁱⁱ.
- It's nearly impossible to completely eradicate coyotes from an area. Despite bounties and large-scale efforts to kill coyotes over the last 100 years, coyotes have in fact expanded their range throughout the U.S. and Canada tremendously. One study even found that killing 75% of a coyote population every year for 50 years would still not exterminate the population^{iv}.

Why killing doesn't work

Shoot or poison coyotes and you will have just as many again within a year or two. Kill one or both members of the alpha pair (A)—the only one that normally reproduces—and other pairs will form and reproduce. At the same time, lone coyotes will move in to mate, young coyotes will start having offspring sooner, and litter sizes will grow.



Removal is costly.

- Coyotes are very intelligent animals, and they're difficult to catch. Even a very skilled trapper or sharpshooter—who works for a hefty price—needs many hours to catch a targeted coyote.

Trapping is inhumane.

- The most common devices used to capture coyotes are leghold traps and neck snares. Both can cause severe injuries, pain and suffering^v.
- Pets become unintended victims of traps set for coyotes. An informal search of media reports suggests thousands of unintended incidents have occurred, causing heartbreak for affected families.
- Non-target wildlife is also caught, and many sustain injuries so severe that they die or must be killed.



PHOTO BY: RICHARD SEELEY

What about relocation?

Although it may seem like a more humane alternative, in most cases relocating a coyote is a death sentence for that animal^{vi}. Coyotes are very territorial and occupy large home ranges, in some cases up to 40 square miles. After being relocated, they will do just about anything to get back home and will undoubtedly face many challenges along the way. Unfamiliar with their new terrain, they are often killed while crossing roads and highways. They may also be injured or killed during territorial disputes with coyotes who are already established in the area where they're released. In addition, state wildlife laws usually prohibit the relocation of coyotes, since they are a rabies-vector species (although rabies is rare in coyotes).

The bottom line is that killing is not a solution for managing conflicts between people and coyotes.

Instead, a two-part program that combines education and hazing is emerging as the most humane way to resolve conflicts with coyotes^{vii}. Education involves teaching residents of your community how to remove food attractants that lure coyotes into communities and how to properly protect pets. Hazing changes the behavior of problem coyotes by teaching them to avoid people and pets.

For more information and tips, visit humanesociety.org/coyotes.



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v Fox, C.H. and C.M. Papouchis (eds.). 2004. Cull of the Wild: A Contemporary Analysis of Wildlife Trapping in the United States. Animal Protection Institute, Sacramento, California.

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