

COYOTES

DESCRIPTION

The coyote is a mammal that lives in prairies, open woodlands, brushy or boulder-strewn areas. Chiefly nocturnal (active at night), it is a true scavenger, eating almost anything animal or vegetable. Its food is predominantly small rodents and rabbits. It sometimes hunts in pairs, and will save uneaten food. Its hunting route is normally about 10 miles. The coyote's head and body are 32-37 inches with a tail from 11-16 inches. Weighing between 20-50 lbs., it looks like a medium-sized dog, gray or reddish gray with rusty legs, feet, and ears; throat and belly whitish. In the evening a series of high-pitched yaps may be heard, especially on the desert. Coyotes generally den in the ground but often use other shelters, usually not more than 6 miles from water. Their pups are born between April and May.

COYOTES AND DOGS

Although you might think coyotes get along well with dogs, coyotes have been known to be aggressive towards small dogs and cats. Coyotes are known to hunt in the early morning hours and late afternoon, so be cautious of your surroundings. If possible, we would recommend you carry a walking stick, whistle, pepper spray, air horn, or golf club with you when you walk your pet at these times (always on a leash, of course). Coyotes have been known to "lurk" in bushes, so try not to stop by bushes or anything that could be a hiding spot for this predator. You may consider carrying a cell phone to call for help if you come across a coyote and feel you or your pet is in danger.

Many people think that because they have a 5-foot block wall, their pets are safe in the back yard. Think again...there have been many reports on TV News reporting that a coyote easily cleared a 5.5 block wall and got into someone's back yard. A 6 foot fence is a far more effective deterrent, though coyotes have been known to dig under cement walls in search of food.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A COYOTE

Most times the coyote will continue past you or cross the street, probably looking for food. However, if a coyote approaches you, wave your arms. Shout in a low, loud tone to create fear. Throw objects such as rocks at the coyote while maintaining eye contact. Make yourself look as big as possible; for example, if you are wearing a jacket open it up like a cape. If possible move towards active or populated areas but do not turn your back on the coyote. Keep your dog as close to you as possible and move towards an active area. Never encourage or allow your dog to interact or "play" with coyotes.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The best advice is to keep your pets indoors with you. When they need to go outside, go out with them and stay close to high pedestrian traffic areas. Coyotes are beautiful, wild mammals that have lived in the desert for years before man. Understanding their habits and patterns will make it a safer place for all of us.