

A community meeting about coyotes was held at 7pm on Wed Oct 5 at Quail Hollow Presbyterian Church. Over 75 community members showed up and several neighboring HOA's were present. Please see the notes from the meeting and review the tips at the very end.

Presenters were the CMPD, CMPD Animal Care & Control and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

Background that led to the meeting:

There were a couple of incidents in the Cameron Wood area near the McMullen greenway. At 11:00, a dog was outside with owner and there was a scuffle between coyote and dog. Coyote left. 2 hours later, coyote jumped a fence where a dog owner was outside with her two small dogs. One received a puncture wound from the coyote and coyote was shoed away. Shortly after that, an owner near Carmel Forest was outside with 3 small dogs. Coyote attacked all three dogs and the owner bear-hugged (!!) the coyote to get it off. The coyote ran off. The owner called CMPD Animal Care & Control who were able to locate the coyote 2 houses down underneath a deck. They were able to easily capture the coyote (atypical behavior) and send the animal to Raleigh for testing. The coyote tested positive for rabies. The good news – all of the dogs engaged in the attacks had current rabies vaccinations. Had one of the animals not been current on rabies, the owner would have to elect to either quarantine their pet for 6 months at an authorized veterinary hospital (at their own expense with no visitation) or euthanize their pet.

Intro info

NC Wildlife biologist John Shaw began the presentation by providing an overview of coyote history in the region. Coyotes are not native to the Southeast. They began appearing here about 20-25 years ago. They are in every county and city in North Carolina and use a variety of habitats, including developed areas like wooded suburbs & greenways, parks and office parks. For the last 5-10 years, they have been well-established and we are at the peak of saturation – meaning, we shouldn't expect to see the population grow any more than it currently stands. There were no numbers shared about the current population size. With the exception of the one rabid coyote recently caught near Cameron Wood neighborhood, call trends regarding coyotes have not fluctuated in the past 5 years.

On the scale of possible threats, the officials presenting said we are more likely to be struck by lightning.

Coyotes are opportunistic and highly adaptable. Their ability to take advantage of food sources found in and around "man-made" habitats has resulted in an increase in coyote sightings and related conflicts. A coyote's diet consists predominantly of mice, squirrels, rabbits, deer (fawns), berries, and when available, garbage. In Charlotte, unsupervised pets, particularly outdoor cats and small dogs (less than 25 lbs.) can be vulnerable to coyote attacks. While coyotes are nocturnal, it is not unusual to see them during the daytime.

One participant did ask a question about her outdoor cats. Mr. Shaw said the preference would be for cats to remain indoors, however cats allowed outdoors will become part of the food chain. Cats will prey on birds and mice, coyotes will prey on cats.

Rabies & Coyotes

Coyotes get rabies from raccoons who are carriers of the disease. Coyotes succumb to rabies very quickly – meaning that they are not long term carriers before expiring and therefore the window where they can spread it or cause harm is very short (5-10 days.) Be aware of and report any coyotes exhibiting behavior indicative of rabies, such as staggering, seizures, and extreme lethargy. Daytime activity is not uncommon and does not necessarily indicate rabies.

What can we do to get rid of coyotes?

Mr. Shaw explained that to remove a coyote from your personal property, you can trap them with foot hold traps (not cages) which are a humane “grab” of the foot, but not painful or damaging. It holds the animal in place until the authorities can come retrieve the coyote. You may only set traps on private property. CMPD reminded everyone that discharging a firearm or arrow (any weapon) within city limits is against our ordinances; however there was some discussion when there is threat to life/limb, firearms or crossbows might be one of your options – bearing in mind the inherent risks of doing so. A gentleman asked if a citation would be waived. The indication was – they weren’t going to say you couldn’t do it – much like “shooting someone in self-defense” but they were not going to encourage it.

All presenters agreed there is not much we can do to eradicate our coyote population. Any programs put in place will only be a temporary measure because coyotes will return, much like deer. There has not been a lot of data on sterilization programs however they are typically ruled out as not being cost-effective.

A few of the HOA’s said they would pull together a group to approach the city regarding putting a possible program in place to trap on the greenways. This may include hiring trappers in areas where larger packs are a nuisance.

Further education:

NC Wildlife information on North Carolina coyotes:

<http://www.ncwildlife.org/Learning/Species/Mammals/Coyote.aspx>

Humane Society: Coyotes

<http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/coyotes>

Tips on Preventing Conflicts with Coyotes

- DO NOT allow pets to run free! Keep cats indoors, particularly at night, and small dogs on a leash or under close supervision at all times.
- Vaccinate your pets for rabies. Without a current rabies vaccination, a small bite wound or scratch will become a bigger heartache. There is no negotiation in the ordinances when rabies is concerned.
- NEVER feed coyotes! DO NOT place food out for any mammals. Clean up bird seed below feeders, pet foods, and fallen fruit. Secure garbage and compost in animal proof containers.
- Always walk dogs on a leash. If approached by a coyote while walking your dog, keep the dog under control and calmly leave the area. DO NOT run or turn your back. Coyotes are territorial and many reports of bold coyotes visiting yards, howling, or threatening larger dogs can often be attributed to this territorial behavior.
- Attempt to frighten away coyotes by making loud noises (e.g., shouting, air horn) and acting aggressively (e.g., waving your arms, throwing sticks, spraying with a hose).
- Be aware of any coyote behaving abnormally or exhibiting unusually bold behavior (e.g., approaching people for food, attacking leashed pets that are with their owners, stalking children, chasing joggers or bikers, etc.) and report these incidents to authorities immediately.
- Be aware of and report any coyotes exhibiting behavior indicative of rabies, such as staggering, seizures, and extreme lethargy. Daytime activity is not uncommon and does not necessarily indicate rabies.
- Teach children to recognize coyotes and to go inside the house (do not run) or climb up on a swing or deck and yell if they are approached.
- Close off crawl spaces under porches and sheds that coyotes or other animals may use.
- Educate your neighbors. Ask them to follow these same steps.
- Trapping may be used to remove problem coyotes in areas where it is safe and legal to do so.

To report animals that are behaving abnormally or are posing an immediate public threat:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (911) – you will be routed to Animal Care & Control

For all other non-emergency coyote concerns:

CMPD, CMPD Animal Care & Control and the NC Wildlife Resources Commission do not have the resources to support non-threatening situations.

The NC Wildlife Resources Commission has compiled a list of licensed trappers that will assist the public when they experience problems with certain wildlife species. Visit this link to find a licensed trapper: <http://www.ncwildlife.org/Trapping/ContactaLicensedTrapper.aspx>