

Living with Wildlife in Manitoba

Coexistence of Pets and Wildlife

Many wild animals have adapted to living in urban areas. Across North America, wildlife such as coyotes, crows, deer, foxes, raccoons, Canada geese, some species of owls and even black bears are now living in areas dominated by human development. As well, more than ever before, people are using wilderness areas for recreation, work and as a place to live. Conflict with wildlife is inevitable. It's important for people learn to coexist with wildlife, increasing safety for themselves, their pets and the wildlife.

PREVENTING CONFLICTS

Feed Pets Indoors

Pet food can attract wildlife. The scent of your pet's food or lingering odours in its food dish will draw animals such as bears, coyotes, foxes, skunks and raccoons into your yard. Feed your pets indoors. If you must feed your pet outdoors, feed it only at set times during the day and take the food dish indoors as soon as your pet finishes eating. Try not to leave the food dish outdoors for more than an hour at any time.

Keep Pets Restrained

The presence of a dog can attract black bears, coyotes, cougars and wolves. All may view a dog as a potential competitor or as food. Wolves and coyotes may also view larger dogs as potential

mates. By controlling a dog with a leash you can reduce the likelihood of it interacting with, aggravating or attracting wildlife, which could get you or your dog attacked.

Wildlife that typically conflict with people are often most active at night. In some cases, this is innate behaviour. In other cases it is the animal attempting to avoid conflict with people. Keeping pets indoors from dusk until dawn will reduce the risk of a wildlife encounter.

Cats are considered prey by coyotes and other predators. Coyotes have healthy populations in Manitoba and can be found from the U.S. border to as far north as Thompson, including well established populations in urban areas. Allowing cats to wander freely puts them at significant risk of attack by coyotes or other predators, including large owls.

Domestic and feral cats are a significant predator of North America's land birds. Estimates say they kill billions of birds annually and many affected bird populations are in decline. Keeping cats indoors or on a lead can help reduce their effect on bird populations and reduce the risks to cats (ex: vehicle collisions).

In Manitoba, it is illegal to let your dog harass wildlife. Consider fencing your yard or installing an invisible fence to control your dog while still allowing it some freedom of movement.

Don't Leave Pets Unattended.

Most wildlife will avoid people, thus human presence acts as a wildlife deterrent. Leaving a pet unattended in your yard can make it vulnerable to attack by predators.

When Walking Your Pet, Carry Deterrents and Be Aware of Your Surroundings

When walking pets in wildlife areas, don't assume wildlife is not nearby. Watch for signs that confirm wild animals have used the area recently. These could include:

- animal tracks
- fresh droppings
- a smell or presence of an animal carcass
- a gathering of scavenger birds
- disturbed garbage containers
- an active coyote or wolf den site
- distant or nearby howling
- disturbed ant hills, logs or squirrel caches

In particular, pay attention to your pet if it seems agitated. It may be a warning sign. Your pet's acute senses will let it know a predator is nearby long before you will realize it.

Don't use headphones while walking your pet. You need to hear your surroundings or you may find yourself surprised and helpless.



Carry a deterrent and know how to operate it. Some deterrents might include:

- a wildlife deterrent spray, sometimes called bear spray, made with capsaicin
- a pressurized gas horn
- a loud emergency whistle
- a rattler (coins or pebbles in a canister) so you don't accidentally surprise wildlife
- a walking stick
- a fixed-blade knife

Walking or hiking in groups is a good idea. Make your presence known to wildlife by making noise, talking, laughing and singing. In most cases, if wildlife hear people approaching, they will move away to avoid an encounter.

Don't Attract Wildlife to Your Yard

Manage garbage responsibly:

- Store garbage and food compost in a secure building, a bear-resistant container or surrounded by electric fencing to make it inaccessible for wildlife.
- Place garbage curbside just prior to pickup, not the night before.
- Clean garbage containers regularly with bleach or ammonia.

Remove bird feeders:

- At a minimum, remove birdfeeders from April to November. During this period, consider using a bird bath to attract birds.



Got a surprise visit this morning

- If you use bird feeders during the winter, clean up any spilled seed daily to ensure it doesn't attract wild animals.

Manage fruit trees:

- Pick all fruit from fruit trees as it ripens, don't allow it to fall to the ground, accumulate and rot.

Keep barbecues clean and grease-free:

- Burn off food residue and clean your barbecue after each use. Don't forget the grease trap.

Protect fish ponds and sand boxes:

- Place secured metal mesh screening over fish ponds.
- Cover sand boxes when not in use.

Reduce cover and denning opportunities:

- Remove any piles of debris and trim overgrown areas in your yard to prevent wildlife from using them as a shelters or dens.
- Prevent access to denning opportunities. Remove tree branches overhanging your house. Seal entry to your attic, chimney and under your shed or deck, as well.

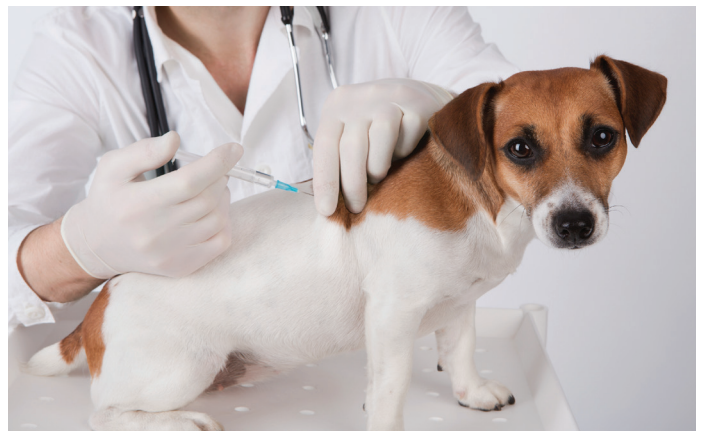
Install fencing:

- Fencing can help keep wildlife from entering areas where they are not welcome. Traditional fencing and electric fencing options are available. Wildlife may be able to jump, climb and dig,

so keep that in mind when selecting fencing materials and construction design. For example, fencing to exclude coyotes should be at least two metres tall and extend underground at least 30 centimetres or have an L-shaped mesh apron extending outward at least 50 centimetres and secured with landscaping staples.

Install items like motion-activated lights, sounds or water sprayers:

- Motion-activated lights discourage unwanted visits from wildlife at night.
- Motion-activated alarms or water sprayers set along paths wild animals use to access your yard can discourage visits. Consider your neighbours before installing alarms.
- While deterrents may be effective at first, they may lose their effect as wildlife become accustomed to them. Change the locations and types occasionally to keep wildlife wary.



VACCINATE YOUR PET

Diseases that affect pets in Manitoba include:

- rabies
- canine distemper
- leptospirosis
- ringworm
- sarcoptic mange

Speak with your veterinarian to determine appropriate vaccinations and other ways to keep your pet disease free.

RESPONDING TO WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS

If you encounter wildlife while with your pet, be sure to maintain control of your pet. Don't approach or crowd wildlife. Make sure the wild animal has an escape route. Stop, stay calm and assess your situation. **DON'T RUN — you may cause a chase.**

What you do should depend on the wild animal and its behaviour. For more information about how to respond to wildlife encounters, visit www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife.



Coyote Hazing

Coyotes are generally reclusive animals that avoid human contact, but they can lose their fear of people if they have neutral or positive encounters with humans, such as when people deliberately feed them.

A coyote with no fear of humans can become bold and aggressive unless it relearns associating people as a threat.

Hazing is a method used to discourage an undesirable behaviour or activity.

Coyote hazing can help maintain a coyote's natural fear of people and deter it from visiting places frequented by humans or approaching people when they are walking their pets.

Coyote hazing is appropriate whenever people encounter a coyote, but always be sure the animal has an escape route. A trapped animal can be unpredictable.

Using a variety of different hazing tools is important, as coyotes can become accustomed to what causes them no harm.

Hazing Methods:

- Be loud and large. Stand tall, wave your arms and shout at the coyote to go away.
- Make noise using your voice, air horns, whistles, a rattler (a can filled with coins or pebbles) or bang pots and pans together.
- Throw sticks, small rocks, cans or balls toward the coyote without striking it. Never throw food.
- Spray them with a garden hose, use a squirt gun filled with a water and vinegar mix, or use a deterrent spray.

Continue hazing a coyote until it leaves the area.

REPORT ANY SICK, INJURED OR ORPHANED WILDLIFE

If you come across an animal you believe is behaving oddly or may be sick, injured or orphaned, make note of the location and report it to your local Sustainable Development office or call the

TIP line at 1-800-782-0076. Doing so could help protect other people or their pets from becoming sick or injured.