

City of Costa Mesa Police Department

Memorandum



DATE: July 9, 2018

TO: Thomas Hatch, City Manager
Robert N. Sharpnack, Chief of Police
Mark Manley, Police Captain

FROM: Vic Bakkila, Police Lieutenant

RE: **Coyote Management Plan – Inaugural Report**

PURPOSE

To provide a first-year overview of the City's Coyote Management Plan to include a summary of data from the *Coyote Cacher* reporting website.

BACKGROUND

In April of 2017, the Police Department implemented a new Coyote Management Plan to provide guidance to City staff and community members regarding coyote activity within Costa Mesa. The plan was modeled after similar plans successfully utilized by other cities and endorsed by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) and the University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR). The Coyote Management Plan is based on coyote behavior education, ways to remove coyote attractants, coyotes hazing, as well as more aggressive strategies utilized by Animal Control personnel and trained volunteers should situations warrant. Success in managing the existence of coyotes within the community rests on the collective and cooperative effort between the City and members of the Costa Mesa community.

Around the same time, UCANR launched the internet-based coyote reporting website, *Coyote Cacher* (<http://ucanr.edu/sites/CoyoteCacher/>). *Coyote Cacher* is a reporting and tracking mechanism highlighted within our Coyote Management Plan that allows community members to self-report coyote activity, from mere sightings to more serious coyote activity. Similar to the City's crime mapping software, the public is able to view the location and nature of recently reported coyote activity. Further, Police Department Animal Control staff is able to view historical data, as well as contact persons reporting activity in order to gain further information, if required. Dr. Niamh Quinn from UCANR, considered one of the foremost coyote experts in Southern California, administers the *Coyote Cacher* website and utilizes its data to conduct research and track coyote activity.

As part of the rollout of the Coyote Management Plan and *Coyote Cacher*, the Police Department hosted a town hall meeting that included Dr. Niamh Quinn and Lt. Kent Smirl from CDFW. Approximately 30 residents attended, in addition to those who viewed the meeting online via the Police Department's Facebook page (this video has approximately 2,600 views on Facebook to date).

The Police Department also debuted two PSA videos regarding coyotes and strategies to mitigate their presence within the community.

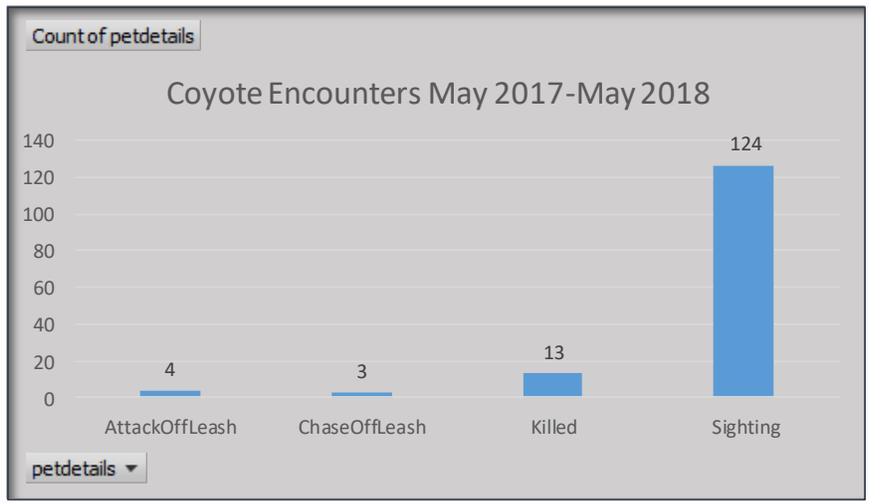
In July of 2017, the Animal Control Unit was notified of a previous coyote attack on a dog at Fairview Park where hazing was utilized to repel the coyote. As a result, and following steps outlined in the Coyote Management Plan, representatives from CDFW, Police Department, and Parks & Community Services hosted a coyote public education event at Fairview Park. Approximately 100 park goers interacted with staff and were provided with sample coyote hazing cans and a printed copy of the Coyote Management Plan. Feedback was extremely positive.

In June of 2018, the Suva Mesa Verde Neighborhood Watch group, headed by Bob Juneman, participated in the “Wildlife Watch” program presented by CDFW. Wildlife Watch is a coyote-specific program aimed to educate residents on coyote prevention and hazing strategies. It employs a similar strategy to Neighborhood Watch empowering neighbors to communicate and appropriately react to coyote sightings and other activity. The Police Department’s newly reformed Crime Prevention Unit recently marketed the Wildlife Watch program to each of the Department’s recognized Neighborhood Watch groups. The Police Department encourages more neighborhoods to take advantage of this opportunity moving forward.

Coyote Cacher Data

The *Coyote Cacher* was introduced in mid-April of 2017. In summary, from May of 2017 to May of 2018, there were 144 self-reported *Coyote Cacher* activities. These activities consisted of:

- 124 coyote sightings
- 4 coyote attacks on animals that were off leash
 - Two incidents did not have any details reported.
 - One incident involved a coyote stalking a neighborhood cat and the coyote was hazed away.
 - One incident was a coyote bite on a Maltese dog. The coyote was subsequently hazed away.
- 3 pets off leash chased by a coyote
 - One incident did not have any details reported.
 - Two incidents involved coyotes present in a yard with other animals. No attacks occurred and coyotes were subsequently hazed away.
- 13 cats killed or suspected (based on carcasses found) of being killed by a coyote
 - Two incidents did not have any details reported.
 - Seven incidents where the reporter saw a coyote kill or in the proximity of deceased cat.
 - Four incidents where cat carcasses were discovered and coyotes were suspected.



From the data listed above, there were 20 self-reported incidents where animals were chased, attacked, or killed. The least active months were February and March with no reported incidents. The most active month was July, with four reported incidents. All other months had either one or two reported incidents. Below denotes the locations of each of these reported incidents.



When an incident is reported in the *Coyote Cacher* where an animal is either chased, attacked or killed, Dr. Quinn’s team at UCANR will attempt to contact the reporting person to obtain further information to better understand the incident. Based on that information, Dr. Quinn may consult with the local animal control agency where the incident occurred, if necessary. Dr. Quinn maintains that coyote activity in Costa Mesa over the past year was normal and consistent with the size and geographical properties of similar cities.

Calls for Service Data

Costa Mesa Animal Control personnel also received 19 coyote-related calls for service that were generated through the City's Communications Dispatch Center, Coyote Hotline or the *Costa Mesa Connect* smartphone app during the same one-year time period. The following is a summary of those calls for service:

- 13 coyote sightings only
- 4 coyotes hazed by Animal Control staff
- 1 pets off leash chased by a coyote
- 1 coyote located and euthanized near Costa Mesa High School

At the time of this memorandum, coyotes are entering their "pupping" season when coyote pups are emerging from their dens and begin entry into the community. During this time, female coyotes will be more protective of their dens and caution should be used if a den is discovered.

Collaborative Efforts within the Community

Costa Mesa Animal Control staff continues to dialogue regularly Dr. Quinn from UCANR and representatives from CDFW. They represent invaluable resources that the Police Department relies heavily on to provide expert barometers for coyote activity and suggested Animal Control responses in concert with the Coyote Management Plan.

Additionally, Animal Control staff works closely with staff from the Newport Beach Police Department (NBPD) Animal Control Unit. The City of Newport Beach employs a similar Coyote Management Plan and their staff was integral in the development of Costa Mesa's plan. NBPD is sensitive to coyote activity that occurs in neighborhoods on the Costa Mesa side of the cities' border. Further, both agencies are sensitive to the potential concerns coyotes pose near K-12 school sites within the Newport-Mesa Unified School District (NMUSD). The Costa Mesa and Newport Beach Animal Control Units are currently working in conjunction with UCANR and CDFW to implement in-service training for NMUSD teachers and staff. A date has yet to be determined for this training, but the goal is to provide it prior to the commencement of the 2018-2019 school year.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, Dr. Quinn characterized coyote activity in Costa Mesa as normal. She did not recognize any alarming or unusual trends over the past year and coyote activity is consistent with what she expected to see. In late 2017, she noted that the reported complaints of community members feeding wildlife in Costa Mesa amounted to only about 1% of all reported coyote activity. The feeding of wildlife is a prime coyote attractant and tends to be higher at around 9% of all coyote activity reports in most cities. More recently, Dr. Quinn provided praise for the residents of Costa Mesa on the frequency and detailed reporting within *Coyote Cacher*. Compared to other regional jurisdictions, Costa Mesa residents have been some of the most diligent reporters on the website. Through reported activity, Dr. Quinn has been able to gather data that assists the Animal Control Unit in understanding and responding to coyote activity within the city.

Animal Control staff has spoken with a number of residents throughout the year regarding coyote concerns. Discussions included the Coyote Management Plan, *Coyote Cacher*, CDFW's Wildlife Watch program, and ways they and the City can work together to mitigate coyote activity within their neighborhoods. The Police Department will continue to bring awareness through social media posts, community outreach events, Neighborhood Watch and the CDFW Wildlife Watch program. The goal is to continue to be proactive in addressing concerns and to maintain dialogue with experts in the field to be adaptive to emerging coyote trends.