

City of Costa Mesa Police Department Memorandum



DATE: October 7, 2019

TO: Robert N. Sharpnack, Chief of Police
Bryan Glass, Police Captain

FROM: Victor Bakkila, Police Lieutenant

SUBJECT: Coyote Management Plan – Annual Report

PURPOSE

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

BACKGROUND

In April 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 Costa Mesa community.

During the same time period, UCANR launched the internet-based coyote reporting website, *Coyote Cacher*, <https://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 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, the Police Department's 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 California, administers the *Coyote Cacher* website and uses 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.

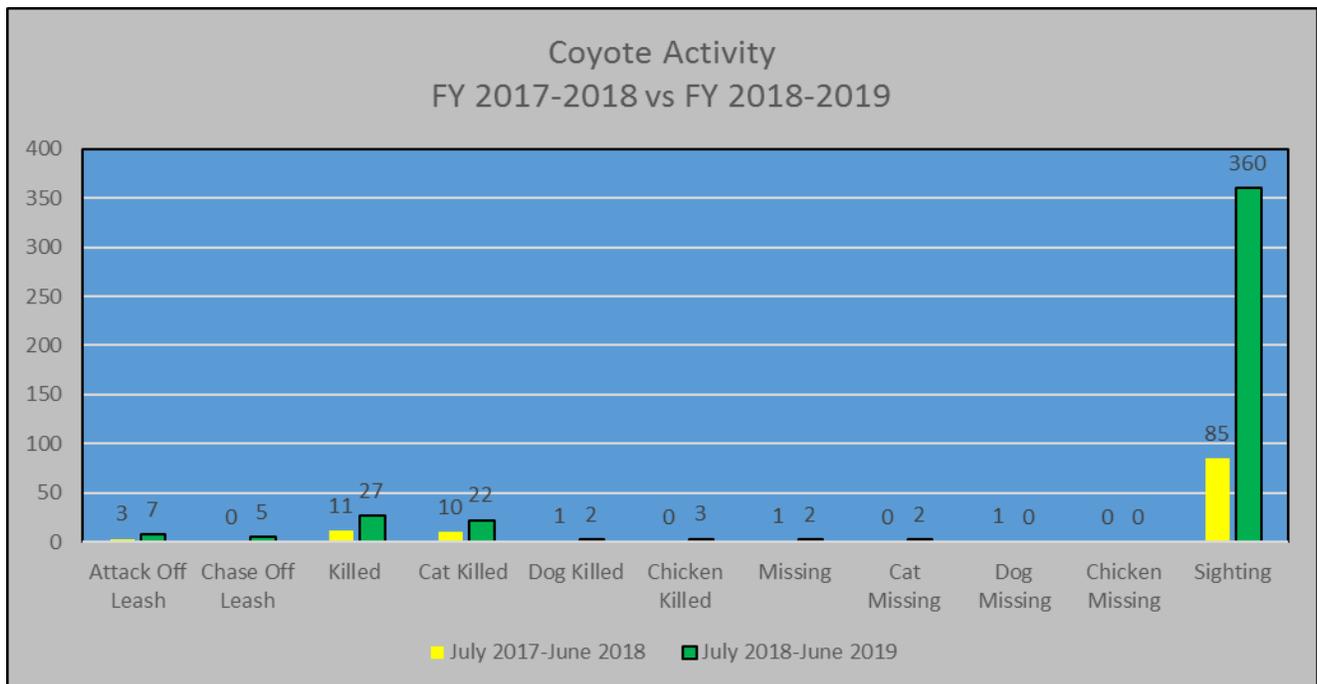
Coyote Cacher Data

The *Coyote Cacher* was introduced in mid-April 2017 and the first couple of months were in the implementation phase where the *Coyote Cacher* was being promoted to the community as an instrument to report coyote activity.

Since implementation, the *Coyote Cacher* now has over two years of consistent data on coyote activity that can be calculated and compared. Below is a table and graph showing the increase in reporting of coyote activity from July 2017 through June 2019.

The citizens of Costa Mesa are to be commended in their efforts to accurately report any coyote activity. Comparing the data from July 2017 through June 2018 and July 2018 through June 2019, there has been a 300% increase in reporting using the *Coyote Cacher*.

Activity	July 2017 - June 2018	July 2018 - June 2019
Attack Off Leash	3	7
Chase Off Leash	0	5
Killed	11	27
	(Cats – 10, Dogs – 1)	(Cats – 22, Dogs – 2, Chickens – 3)
Missing	1	2
	(Cats – 0, Dogs – 1)	(Cats – 2, Dogs – 0)
Sighting	85	360
Total Reports:	100	401



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.

Dr. Quinn made the below statement about the City's Coyote Management Plan and how she believes, we as a city are executing and administering the plan.

“The City of Costa Mesa remains dedicated to making data-driven coyote management decisions. The increased reporting in sightings is not necessarily an indicator of increased encounters or conflicts. It is more likely an indicator of the City's dedication to education and information collection. The City's use of Coyote Cacher allows for almost immediate responses to conflict. The City also remains engaged with its neighboring cities. This is important since the City has big borders that coyotes do not recognize.”

On March 19, 2019, the city council voted to make April Coyote Awareness Month. In April 2019, the Costa Mesa Police Department created the email coyote@costamesaca.gov enabling citizens to add any pictures and videos of their coyote encounters. This email is directly linked to my email, so I receive an immediate update on any coyote reporting. This email complements the alerts I receive from the *Coyote Cacher*, via my smart phone.

On April 15, 2019, and April 23, 2019, the Costa Mesa Animal Control provided two community meetings on coyotes. Dr. Quin from UNCANR and Dave Dodge and two others from CDFW were also present. Both meetings were well attended with approximately 25 citizens at each meeting. On April 22, 2019, I attended the Newport Mesa School District annual principals' training. I gave them training on coyotes in the district and the challenges we face on their campuses, mainly dealing with children feeding wildlife. During this training, I gave the principals shaker cans, a copy of our coloring book and coyote management plan. I offered the principals coyote coloring books for their students. So far, only Kaiser Elementary has requested any coloring books.

Calls for Service Data

From July 2017 through June 2018, Costa Mesa Animal Control personnel received 20 coyote-related calls for service that were generated through the City's Communications Center, Coyote Hotline, or the *Costa Mesa* QAlert app. Under the same systems, there were 51 calls for service from July 2018 through June 2019. During this same time, Costa Mesa Animal Control deployed traps at several locations throughout the city. From July 2018 through June 2019, there were 334 self-initiated incidents by Animal Control where traps were set and/or checked by Animal Control staff.

At the time of this memorandum, coyotes are in their “dispersal” season when younger coyotes are becoming members of their current pack, moving to form a new pack or becoming a nomad. During this time, it may appear there are more coyotes present. This will subside when the packs are stabilized and the nomads are established.

Collaborative Efforts within the Community

Costa Mesa Animal Control staff continues to dialogue regularly with 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 work closely with staff from the Newport Beach Police Department (NBPD) Animal Control Unit. The City of Newport Beach employs a similar Coyote Management Plan. NBPD is sensitive to coyote activity that occurs in neighborhoods on the Costa Mesa side of their city's border.

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 2017 and 2018, 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 their frequency and detailed reporting through the *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 Animal Control in understanding and responding to coyote activity within Costa Mesa.

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.

As demonstrated above, the reporting of coyote activity in Costa Mesa has increased dramatically. This can be attributed to the strong community outreach and education campaign the City launched after designating April as Coyote Awareness Month.