

COYOTE SAFETY — COMMUNITY ADVISORY

Protecting Residents, Pets, and Wildlife

Issued by the Township of Lawrence / Animal Control & Public Safety Division

Issued: July 28, 2026

Section 1 — About Coyotes in Our Community

Coyotes are a natural and established part of New Jersey's ecosystem. Over recent decades, they have steadily expanded their range into suburban and urban areas throughout the state, including communities in Mercer County and the Lawrence Township area. Their adaptability and intelligence have made them successful in a wide variety of environments, from woodlands and open fields to parks and residential neighborhoods.

It is important for residents to understand that coyotes are generally shy, non-aggressive animals. When given the opportunity, they will avoid contact with humans. They are most active at dawn, dusk, and during nighttime hours, though they may be observed at any time of day, particularly during breeding and pup-rearing seasons.

Coyote sightings alone are not cause for alarm. The presence of a coyote in your neighborhood does not indicate an immediate threat. However, residents are encouraged to take sensible, consistent precautions to discourage habituation and minimize conflict.

Section 2 — Why Coyotes May Approach Residential Areas

Coyotes may be drawn into residential neighborhoods for several reasons:

- **Availability of food sources** — unsecured garbage cans, open compost, fallen fruit, and pet food or water bowls left outdoors provide easy, reliable meals.
- **Loss of natural habitat and prey** — development and land fragmentation push coyotes closer to human-inhabited areas in search of territory and food.
- **Habituation** — coyotes that have lost their natural fear of humans, often due to deliberate or accidental feeding, are more likely to approach homes and people.
- **Denning season (March - August)** — during this period, adult coyotes are actively raising pups and may be more visible and more defensive of their territory than at other times of year.

Section 3 — Protecting Your Household

Securing Food Sources

- Store garbage in wildlife-resistant containers with tight-fitting, latching lids.
- Do not leave pet food or water bowls outside overnight.
- Remove fallen fruit, birdseed, and other food debris from the ground promptly.
- Keep compost bins fully sealed; use wildlife-resistant designs with secure lids and enclosed bases.
- Clean outdoor grills thoroughly after each use to eliminate food residue and grease.

Protecting Pets

- Supervise all pets when they are outdoors, especially at dawn, dusk, and after dark.
- Keep cats indoors or within fully enclosed outdoor spaces ("cacios") to prevent unsupervised roaming.
- Walk dogs on a leash no longer than six feet at all times.

- Do not allow dogs to roam unsupervised in yards with gaps, damage, or insufficient height in fencing.
- Install coyote rollers or hardware cloth apron extensions on fencing to prevent coyotes from climbing over or digging underneath.

Securing Your Property

- Seal all openings beneath decks, porches, and sheds that could provide shelter or serve as denning sites.
- Use motion-activated lights or sprinkler systems near gardens, outbuildings, and low-traffic areas of your property.
- Trim dense vegetation and clear brush piles that provide hiding cover or encourage coyotes to linger on your property.

Section 4 — What To Do If You Encounter a Coyote

IMPORTANT: Do **NOT** run. Running may trigger a natural chase response in the coyote. Stay calm and stand your ground.

If you encounter a coyote, follow these steps:

- **Stop and stand tall** — make yourself appear as large as possible by raising your arms and standing upright.
- **Make loud, assertive noises** — clap your hands firmly, shout in a deep voice, shake a can filled with pennies, or use an air horn.
- **Wave your arms and maintain eye contact** — direct, confident eye contact signals dominance and discourages approach.
- **Throw objects toward (not at) the coyote** — tossing sticks, rocks, or other items in the coyote's direction encourages it to retreat without causing injury.

- **Back away slowly** once the coyote retreats or moves away — do not turn your back or run.
- This process is known as "**hazing**" and is the recommended method for reinforcing a coyote's natural wariness of humans.

① **Note:** Hazing is the most effective long-term deterrent. A coyote that is hazed consistently and repeatedly will learn to avoid human contact, reducing conflict for the entire community over time.

Section 5 — What NOT To Do

- Do **NOT** feed coyotes — intentionally or unintentionally. Feeding is the primary cause of habituation and dangerous behavior.
- Do **NOT** approach or attempt to touch a coyote under any circumstances.
- Do **NOT** corner a coyote — always provide the animal with a clear, unobstructed escape route.
- Do **NOT** leave children unattended in outdoor areas with known or suspected coyote activity.
- Do **NOT** assume a coyote seen during daylight hours is sick or rabid — daytime activity is common and expected, especially during pup-rearing season (March – August).

Section 6 — Signs of a Potentially Sick or Dangerous Coyote

While most coyotes pose little risk to people, residents should report a coyote **immediately** if it exhibits any of the following warning signs:

- Appears disoriented, stumbling, staggering, or walking in circles.
- Shows no fear of humans even after repeated, vigorous hazing attempts.

- Has visible injuries, signs of mange (patchy fur loss or skin irritation), or appears severely emaciated.
- Has approached, threatened, or bitten a person or pet without provocation.

These behaviors may indicate illness, injury, or extreme habituation. Do not attempt to intervene — contact Animal Control immediately using the information in Section 7.

Section 7 — Reporting and Contact Information

To report a coyote sighting, a coyote exhibiting concerning behavior, or a coyote attack on a person or pet, please use the contacts below:

Contact	Phone Number	When to Call
Lawrence Township Animal Control	(609) 844-7092	Coyote sightings, behavioral concerns, injured or aggressive animals
NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife	(908) 735-8793	Wildlife management questions, reporting sick or dangerous wildlife
Emergency Services (Police / EMS)	9-1-1	Any situation involving an aggressive animal or immediate threat to personal safety

Residents are also encouraged to log coyote sightings at the online coyote sighting report form at <https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/016dec1d4944495b6e99212d8ad34a4>. Consistent community reporting helps Animal Control and Public Safety officials track coyote activity patterns across Lawrence Township and respond proactively.

Section 8 — Living in Coexistence

Coyotes are highly intelligent and ecologically valuable animals. They play an important role in maintaining the health of local ecosystems by helping to naturally

regulate rodent and small mammal populations, which in turn benefits gardens, parks, and residential green spaces throughout our community.

With reasonable, consistent precautions and the practice of hazing, the vast majority of communities across New Jersey — and across the country — successfully and peacefully coexist with local coyote populations. The Township's goal is not to eliminate coyotes from the landscape, but to maintain a respectful, safe boundary between wildlife and residential life that benefits both people and animals alike.

The Township of Lawrence thanks all residents for their cooperation, attentiveness, and commitment to responsible wildlife coexistence. Together, we can keep our neighborhoods safe and our local ecosystem healthy for generations to come.

For more information and additional resources, visit the Township of Lawrence official website at

[Township website placeholder].

This advisory was prepared in accordance with guidance from the **New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife** and the **Humane Society of the United States**.

Please share this advisory with your neighbors. — Township of Lawrence / Animal Control / July 2026