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Sally Ellertson
Public Information Officer
141 West Renfro
Burleson, Texas 76028-4261
817-426-9622
F: 817-426-9390
sellertson@burlesontx.com
www.burlesontx.com

Coyotes, bobcats, possums, raccoons, skunks, wild turkeys and even a few armadillo are not strangers to the inner city limits of Burleson. The City has been educating residents about co-existing with wildlife for several years. As Burleson has grown from less than 21,000 residents in 2000 to more than 34,000 in 2009, the natural habitats for these wild creatures have been eroded by development, both residential and commercial.

When a coyote attacks and kills a household pet, the reality of living where there are still wide open spaces, becomes clear. Coyotes, bobcats, and other wild animals can actually be drawn to the urban areas because there are more food resources available, so if we build and develop in an area that has been home to wild animals, don't expect the wild animals to move out. Experts with the Texas Parks and Wildlife division say we need to learn to live together. Here's how.

- Don't feed coyotes or any other wild animals. Keep pet food and water inside. Keep your garbage securely stored.
- Keep compost piles securely covered. Do not include animal bones or animal fat in your compost pile.
- Keep pets inside, confined securely in a kennel or exercise yard or within the close presence of an adult.
- Walk pets on a leash and accompany your pet outside, especially at night.
- Keep wild bird seed in feeders elevated or hanging above ground and clean up spilled seed from the ground. Coyotes and rodents can be drawn to the seed.
- Keep fruit trees fenced or pick up fruit that falls on the ground.
- Do not feed cats that have turned wild. Wildlife may prey on those cats, and then feed on the cat food that you leave out for wild cats.
- Minimize clusters of shrubs, trees and other cover that might attract rodents or small mammals, which in turn could attract larger predators.

Above all else, do not run if you encounter a coyote. Yell, wave your arms, throw something or spray an approaching coyote with water. Coyotes and other wild animals are not out to hurt you, but if they get used to humans, they have the potential to get bolder. If wild animals show up in your neighborhood, they have found a food source.

Call the City's animal services division at 817-426-9280. If you receive no answer, and it's an emergency, call the Burleson Police Department at 817-426-9903, 426-9904 or 426-9905. All coyote sightings should also be reported to the DFW Wildlife Coalition, 972-234-WILD.

For more information about coyotes and other wild animals, go to these links to Texas Parks and Wildlife stories.

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/nuisance/coyote/>

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/releases/?req=20070319c>

http://www.tpwmagazine.com/archive/2008/dec/ed_1/