

AVERSION CONDITIONING AND HUMANE HAZING

Aversion Conditioning is a suite of tools and techniques used to reshape behavior through negative, or aversive, stimulus. When working with coyotes, aversion conditioning is used to establish and maintain healthy boundaries between humans and coyotes.

Coyotes are naturally fearful of humans and they will try to avoid interaction. However, they can learn to tolerate humans when nothing “bad” happens in their presence. Coyotes can increase their proximity tolerance for humans when they find food ‘rewards’ in an urban setting or when they receive food directly from a person. Aversion conditioning is used to reverse this learned behavior and sensitize coyotes to people and urban spaces.

Humane hazing is a form of aversion conditioning used to compel coyotes to move away and keep a respectful and safe distance from humans.

In addition to aversion conditioning, there must be a concerted effort to locate and eliminate any food resources that might have attracted the coyote(s) in the first place.

Humane Hazing Principles

- While community members should know how to implement basic hazing techniques, strategic or high-intensity hazing should be conducted by experts or qualified personnel.
- When hazing a coyote, a person’s clear delivery of confidence and assertiveness is more important than props or sophisticated tools.
- A coyote may be less responsive to hazing in close proximity to a den site or pups, a food resource, or when a domestic dog is present. Hazing is not appropriate near a natal den or established rendezvous site where there are young pups present, where a coyote is guarding a prey item, or toward a sick or otherwise debilitated coyote.
- Retreating from a coyote or failure to follow through with hazing can lead to the coyote being more complacent or at ease.
- In order to be effective, the person hazing must be clearly visible by the coyote so it associates the aversive stimulus with a person. Flashing car lights or honking are not effective hazing strategies.
- When hazing groups of adolescents, try to identify and focus on the adult. Once that animal “turns shoulder” the rest will follow, thus teaching the younger animals to also keep a respectful distance from humans.

Humane Hazing Basics

- ! Always put human safety first!
- ! Never run from a coyote.
- ! Never corner a coyote; always allow it a safe escape route.
- ! Be aware of traffic and other hazardous conditions.
- ! Be sure companion dogs are desensitized to hazing and props in advance.

Basic Humane Hazing Techniques

- If accompanied by a dog, be sure the dog is on a leash no longer than 6' and at your side. Deploy basic hazing techniques to create distance between you and the coyote(s) as you move out of the area. Report this encounter to officials.
- If not accompanied by a dog, stand tall and make yourself big. Make and maintain eye contact. Most importantly, advance toward the coyote until it retreats. If it stops and stares back, keep advancing.* You want it to move out of your sight.
- If you need to make yourself appear even bigger, you can use props, like waving a stick or article of clothing in the air, opening an umbrella, or snapping open a large garbage bag as you advance.
- Make some noise. You can clap your hands, shout, 'bark'. Mean business!
- If you need to be louder, use a noisemaker as you advance on the coyote, like an air horn or rescue whistle, a 'penny' can (a soda can filled with coins), a party horn.
- If you feel the need to extend your reach, throw a projectile toward (not at) the animal as you advance, like sticks, a clump of dirt, small rocks, a tennis ball. In warm weather, you can use a strong spray from a garden hose, water balloons or a squirt gun.

** If a coyote is reluctant to move away after active hazing, consider the time of year and if pups might be present, or if there might be a prey item nearby that it is guarding. Give it space and report the incident to officials so they can investigate the underlying cause of the coyote's behavior.*

Belvedere's Expanded Coyote Yard & Neighborhood Checklist

Learn About Coyotes

- Review information on the City's Coyote Awareness Page on the City website
- Review instructions on how to properly haze coyotes.
- Discuss coyote safety with your family including children.

Be Prepared

- Add the Marin Humane to your contacts. (415) 883-4621
- Be prepared with hazing props, if you feel you need them.
- If you walk with a dog, desensitize it to hazing and hazing props.

Reduce Attractants

Handling of garbage and green waste

Do not allow garbage or recycling bins to become overfilled. Lids must shut.

Be sure lids are secure and functioning properly. Replace if damaged.

Keep discarded meat/dairy in the freezer until trash day.

Composting

Be sure the compost bin is secure and animals cannot gain access.

Barbeques

Clean after each use. Keep drip-tray clean and inaccessible to animals.

Birdseed/squirrel feeders

Birdseed attracts rodents and the animals that prey on rodents.

(a) Remove feeder

(b) Install a rodent exclusion barrier system.

Harborage (shelter and hiding spots)

Dense vegetation and debris piles can attract rodents and other wildlife.

Remove any debris or brush piles.

Keep grass trimmed and vegetation thinned.

Lollipop pruning of shrubs opens the base but leaves a full canopy.

Inspect home's exterior for any openings, holes, gaps.

Make necessary repairs to prevent animals from accessing shelter.

Include decks and landings.

Garden and Fruit Trees

Coyotes are attracted to fruits and vegetables, as are rodents.

Ensure ripe and fallen fruit is picked/removed daily.

Prevent mammals from accessing your vegetable garden.

Companion Animals

Pet food must never be left where it is accessible to wildlife.

Remove pet feces from the yard, daily.

Keep cats contained for their safety.

Catios and Cat Gardens allow cats to enjoy the outdoors safely.

Walk dogs on a leash no longer than 6'.

Do not allow small dogs outdoors, unattended.

Stray, Feral and Free-Roaming Cats

Supplied food must never be left where it is accessible to wildlife.