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NWRC Spotlight - Does Hazing Coyotes Work?

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In cities and towns across America, coyotes are thriving. This increased contact with people has led to bolder and more aggressive behaviors towards people and pets.

Hazing (i.e., scaring wildlife) often is promoted as a nonlethal method to reduce urban coyote conflicts, but there have been few controlled studies to evaluate its effectiveness. To better understand how coyotes with different human experiences respond to hazing, NWRC and Utah State University scientists conducted a behavioral experiment with captive coyotes at the NWRC field station in Millville, Utah.

Captive coyotes were exposed to one of five human experiences: 1) adult walking, 2) adult walking with a dog, 3) adult hand-feeding coyotes and walking, 4) child walking, and 5) child hand-feeding coyotes and walking. After repeating the human experiences with the coyotes for five days, the participating adult or child then was asked to haze any coyote that approached them to within 1 to 3 meters (3 to 10 feet). Hazing involved shaking a tin can full of coins, yelling, and stomping their feet.

Results showed the number of times coyotes approached and experienced hazing decreased over time. This suggests that coyotes that have been hazed learn to avoid behaviors (i.e., getting too close to people) that might result in more hazing. Additionally, coyotes that were fed or were followed by a person with a dog were more likely to approach a person even if it resulted in being hazed. Researchers conclude that coyote hazing can work, but a coyote's past experiences with people influences hazing effectiveness. Thus, keys to reducing urban coyote conflicts include encouraging people to proactively haze coyotes, avoiding pet-coyote interactions, and not feeding coyotes.

For more information, please contact nwrc@usda.gov.

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