

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, April 12, 2022

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: COYOTE RESPONSE AND COEXISTENCE STRATEGY

FROM:

Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager, Community Services

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide further updates regarding the development of a formalized Coyote Response and Coexistence Strategy, to provide information regarding distribution of this new publication and deployment of the Strategy. Included within, this report also provides information regarding the City of Vaughan's engagement and partnership with the University of Toronto to study urban coyotes in the City.

Report Highlights

- Animal Services, in collaboration with Corporate and Strategic Communications, has developed a Coyote Response and Coexistence Strategy.
- This strategy is intended to provide further information and guidance to residents about coexistence with coyotes, to provide clarity regarding the City's response to resident encounters with coyotes and will be made available to residents through access and distribution via various corporate channels.
- The City of Vaughan engaged and partnered with the University of Toronto to conduct a comprehensive study of urban coyotes in the City of Vaughan to gain valuable data and observations on the behaviours and impact of coyotes in an urban environment.

Recommendations

1. That this report be received for information purposes.

Background

The City's ongoing response to wildlife, and more specifically to coyotes, has represented a comprehensive, balanced and science-based approach. This response incorporates public safety, education, environmental impacts, and compliance/enforcement activities that promote safe communities for people and their pets and further support and promote safe coexistence with coyotes. Through continuous assessment and evaluation, staff have identified further opportunity for enhancement, founded on establishing a formalized Coyote Response and Coexistence Strategy. This is consistent with the approach of many other municipalities and aligns with advice gained through consultation with wildlife experts.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry - Coyotes in Ontario](#)
[Coyote Watch Canada - Municipal Framework](#)

Analysis and Options

Coyote Response and Coexistence Strategy

In response to ongoing reports of sightings and encounters over the past several years, Animal Services has intensified patrol and outreach efforts to provide a higher level of citizen outreach and response. Through leveraging existing Animal Services resources, a greater focus on response to coyote-related calls was implemented. Animal Services Officers are trained for and skilled in responding to coyote concerns brought forward by residents and/or identified during routine duties/activities. In addition, Enforcement Services resources have been and continue to be leveraged and drawn upon to address matters with cross-interests such as conditions of private properties that provide food attractants, etc. This broad-based approach and utilization of existing resources between two divisions of By-law & Compliance, Licensing & Permits Services has and will continue to create opportunities to correct conditions that have adverse effects including inadvertently attracting wildlife; thereby minimizing the potential for conflicts before they arise.

Wildlife authorities and experts agree that coyotes cannot be successfully re-located or culled in response to conflict. Similar such attempts historically have only resulted in

greater conflicts, public outcry, and have proven unsuccessful. Successful coexistence is the most realistic and evidence-based approach, while maintaining a team of expert in-house staff with the ability to immediately escalate response should public safety warrant. Animal Services staff have demonstrated their ability to and are fully prepared to respond as appropriate and have continued to collaborate extensively with industry experts such as Coyote Watch Canada (“CWC”) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (“MNR”). This collaboration also further extends to many municipal partners to ensure staff remain current and fully informed of related matters across the various municipalities, provincially, and nation-wide.

As a result of the local experience in Vaughan and consultation with provincial, municipal, and not-for-profit partners, Animal Services and Corporate Communications have developed the Coyote Response and Coexistence Strategy. Informed by scientific data and benchmarking of successful municipal practices, the intent of the Strategy is to formalize efforts and processes to mitigate conflicts between coyotes and residents, and/or their pets, and to educate the public about coexisting with coyotes in Vaughan.

The Strategy includes:

- Community outreach and education;
- Receiving reports of coyote activity and maintaining an information database;
- Field response/intervention to address inappropriate coyote activity; and
- Restrictions of wildlife feeding/attractants and unfavourable property conditions through comprehensive by-law regulations (e.g. Property Standards and Animal Control By-laws).

The Strategy seeks to provide residents with information in an accessible format, to ensure that residents are better informed, understand the City’s approach to mitigating issues that arise due to the existence of coyotes in urban areas, and to provide educational information on the native coyote species; and what to do when they are encountered.

Accordingly, the Strategy contains three primary public education components:

1. **Educational materials** – Brochures, informational door-hangers hand-delivered or mailed to specific neighborhoods if there are incidents. Detailed information and appropriate links made available on local websites, e-newsletters, development of various public service announcements, or coyote signage posted in appropriate parks and open spaces;

2. **Training** – Incorporating coyote education in schools and making educational information and videos available to the public; and
3. **Public outreach, education and strategic response** – Composed of trained Animal Services Officers who provide community outreach, online information-sharing sessions, classroom presentations with safety tips and education, and following up directly with individuals and in neighborhoods who may have concerns. Additionally, strategic response includes identified focused initiatives that include increased presence of Animal Services Officers in neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces and continued leveraging of the Enforcement Services division to address any identified concerns on private property, accordingly. Vaughan Animal Services is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond to any human-wildlife conflict situation, and will escalate response as necessary for any emergent situation.

City of Vaughan - University of Toronto Partnership

The City engaged and has partnered with faculty from the Department of Biology and Department of Geography of the University of Toronto to study urban coyotes in the City of Vaughan. The project was initiated in May 2021 and is ongoing, but has experienced sporadic delays due to COVID-19 restrictions. The project, named “Threat or Neighbours,” will study the behaviour and impact of coyotes in an urban environment. This initiative identified as a Research Opportunity Project involves several Associate Professors and under-graduate students from the University of Toronto Biology and Geography teams working with Animal Services and other City staff to gather data from 25 camera traps, conduct a field study, review existing records and reports to the City on coyote sightings and interactions, research of existing literature on urban coyote populations, and any other relevant academic material/studies and publications.

The purpose of this project is to gather ecological data on estimated population size, movement, activity patterns, den locations and behavioural preferences which will be used to enhance scientific data on coyotes and assist the City in developing a viable, long-term strategy for mitigating issues and conflicts with coyotes in urban areas.

This data is being collected and will be used as part of comparative data collection from the Koffler Scientific Reserve, which is a University of Toronto ecological research site, composed mainly of wetlands and forests. Additionally, the project team is partnered with the Urban Wildlife Information Network (UWIN), a consortium of studies of habitat use by multiple wildlife species in urban landscapes, which will allow the biology team to share wildlife data from different networks.

University of Toronto students are also completing work studies to design a GIS form that would enhance reporting capabilities for Vaughan residents through the City’s website and also inform and focus patrol and outreach efforts for Animal Services staff. This site will be similar to reporting sites such as those of the City of Oakville, City of

Toronto and City of Niagara Falls. Students have also created a survey for Vaughan residents to gather their perceptions of coyotes to assist with research input. Together, the City of Vaughan and University of Toronto would deploy a mailed paper survey, as well as an online survey.

At the conclusion of the project, the University of Toronto team will provide the City with a formal report of their findings that will further inform the City's over-all approach to supporting a safe and healthy community for residents, pets, and natural wildlife.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact to the City's budget.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

Not applicable.

Conclusion

Since the enhancement of Vaughan Animal Services, namely the introduction of wildlife response in 2016, the coexistence of wildlife within our communities and expanding urban environment continues to be a priority for the City. Continuation of service response and compliance/enforcement activities is best augmented with enhanced and strategic public awareness. Wildlife conflicts can be predictable and more often than not preventable with the right balance of public education, outreach and strategic response. This Coyote Response and Coexistence Strategy will further provide for and serve to educate and inform residents, while clarifying the City's response to public concerns and dispelling myths and nonfactual information which will, as intended, ultimately support and promote safety and wellbeing for children, wildlife, and family pets.

For more information, please contact:

Susan Kelly, Director & Chief Licensing Officer, By-law and Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services, ext. 8952

Attachments

1. Coyote Response and Coexistence Strategy, Animal Services/Corporate and Strategic Communications, March 2022

Prepared by

Susan Kelly, Director & Chief Licensing Officer, By-law and Compliance, Licensing & Permit Services, ext. 8952

Approved by

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Gus Michaels, Deputy City Manager,
Community Services

Reviewed by

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Nick Spensieri, City Manager