

# Living With Coyotes

## Coyote Facts

**Description:** The coyote is the size and shape of a small shepherd dog, about four feet in length with a full, black-tipped tail about 14 inches long. Weights are 30 to 40 pounds. Their long hair varies in color with geography and season from pale grayish buff to rich reddish brown. The ears are rusty red behind. Coyotes may live up to 20 years, but ten years is a rough average.



**Range:** Coyotes live statewide in Colorado and in many areas are quite common. They thrive despite widespread attempts to control or eradicate them because of their alleged attacks on livestock. Individuals may be very bold, attracted to open garbage dumps where carcasses of poultry or livestock are discarded.

**Diet:** Coyotes eat plants and meat. On a hunting circuit three or four miles long, they forage for birds, eggs, mice, rabbits, carrion of large wild mammals or livestock and occasional insects and fruit – in short, just about anything organic. They are active day or night, but mostly at dawn and dusk.

**Reproduction:** Females breed just once annually, in January to March, and produce a litter of about six pups after a gestation period of nine weeks. The expectant female burrows up to 20 feet into a hillside or bank to prepare a nursery den for the young, and frequently digs a second burrow in case the litter is disturbed in the first.

# The Cunning Coyote



Coyotes are extremely adaptable animals and rapidly adjust to changing conditions. In the past, wildlife managers have found that coyote populations can actually expand rather than decline in response to eradication attempts. As a result, a variety of lethal and non-lethal control methods are used to manage populations and control damage.

Coyotes are found in most of North America, but are most abundant on the open prairie and deserts. They are comfortable in the country, mountains, or in cities, as long as there is appropriate shelter and food. As a result, people must be aware of their presence and take precautions to avoid conflict with them. With a better understanding of coyotes and their habitat, humans can coexist with these adaptable and "cunning" animals.

## Coyote Or Dog?

Dogs are fond of wandering around and inspecting objects (tree, shrub, log, etc.) in wide open areas or fields. Coyotes, however, tend to walk in a straight line through open areas. They are concerned more about their safety than they are curious of objects. Dogs love to investigate, getting a real kick out of being in the field. Coyotes are more likely to be all business and have a good idea of where they are going - and what to do when they get there.



Paw prints of a dog differ from those of coyote. The picture on the right side of this page shows a dog's paw and also one that belongs to a coyote. The front paw of the large dog is at the bottom of the picture; paw shown at top of picture is that of a coyote. Note the different shape of the rear pad of each animal's paw.

Learn to differentiate by shape, not size. A large dog's paw print could easily be five inches longer or more.