



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Subject: Coyotes

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Marketing and  
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To: OFSRA In regards to the coyote situation in the meadow

Coyotes are common throughout California and inhabit almost all areas and elevations in the state. Official population estimates range from 250,000 to 750,000 individuals. Most adults weigh from 25 to 35 lbs with males being larger than the females. Breeding season generally runs January through February and gestation runs 63 days. Pups are weaned at 5 to 6 weeks and normally disperse late summer to early fall. Most females breed their second year and it is common for a yearling female to stay with the breeding pair to help feed and defend the next years litter. Coyotes are very protective and territorial around dens or pups, especially towards domestic dogs.

A Coyotes diet can consist of just about anything, from Manzanita berries to road killed deer, but they prey heavily on rodents. Meadows tend to have high rodent populations. Because of this the meadow will always be a draw to coyotes. The pond is also a draw during the dry months as it will tend to attract prey.

Essentially you have great coyote habitat with the pond and the meadow. From what I have been told it dose not sound like the coyotes have become aggressive towards people, but the aggression towards dogs makes it sound like you possibly have a breeding pair that had a den and pups in the field, or moved a litter of pups in the field once they moved form the initial den sight.

There are a number of things I would recommend you do. First off would be to ensure that no pet food or garbage is left out that would attract coyotes or increase rodent populations. This also means cleaning up waste bird seed around bird feeders. Eliminate rodent habitat by removing under growth from in and around homes.

Individual yards could be fenced to protect pets from coyotes. Dogs should be kept on leads when out of the yard and cats should be kept indoors, or at least taken into the house when it starts to get dark since most coyote predation takes place at night.

Coyotes should also be harassed. Do not let them get comfortable in and around people or pets. Yell at them, use noise makers, etc... run them off. They need to maintain a fear of humans.

The next thing would be to reduce cover in the meadow, don't remove all of it. I would thin it down and leave the creek channel brushed. As it is now the brush is thick enough for coyotes to move in, den, and raise pups right there. When this happens dogs are in danger as coyotes will attack them to defend the pups and the territory. This also puts the meadow at the center of the Coyotes core area and predation of all things will increase due to the proximity to the den, increasing the risk to pets of predation.

Doing all of these things should help. As a last resort removal of individual coyotes might be an option. The only trouble is, coyotes are hard to remove. They typically will not go into cage traps, so that option is out. Padded leghold traps can only be used when coyotes present a threat to "human health and safety". This does not include predation to pets. The only other option for removal would be shooting and considering how many homes surround the meadow safety becomes a real concern. Coyotes that are removed will probably also be replaced by new coyotes as long as habitat conditions exist that attract coyotes. For that reason, unless you have real problem individual, habitat modification and harassment are probably the best options for now.

I also checked with the county to see if there was any reason you could not do vegetation control in the meadow and could find none. The meadow appears AE-37; open space Williamson act contract. William Dorrell (California Reforestation Inc. 22230-A S. Colorado Dr. Sonora Ca. 95370. 209-588-1920) should be able to help you with a vegetation management plan, and now is the time of year to do it.

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