



The next 4-6 weeks is mating season for coyotes throughout much of the Midwest. Do not let your dogs out alone and don't allow your outdoor cats to roam. Although coyotes are prevalent in outlying and rural areas, they're also thriving in suburban and urban areas, and smaller towns as well.

Coyote breeding typically peaks in late February and early March, the gestation period averages 58 to 63 days. Male coyotes can become more aggressive during this time of year,

the long and short of it all is that coyotes always pose a risk to your dog (and other small pets). That risk increases during mating season.

Spay or neuter your pet. Coyotes are attracted to and can mate with un-spayed or unneutered domestic dogs. Un-spayed female dogs in season can attract male coyotes. Unneutered male dogs can be lured away by the scent of a female coyote in her ovulation cycle. Additionally, male dogs can be lured by the female coyote's scent and killed by male coyotes.

Be mindful that clever coyotes learn daily schedules of people and their pets. If you let your dog out every evening at 9 p.m., chances are a coyote is well aware of your routine. A coyote might be waiting in the shadows at 9 p.m. sharp; so change your schedule a bit, walk your dog on leash close to you, and keep a close eye on them at all times.

Coyote caution tips:

- Never feed coyotes – It is illegal to feed coyotes in most places. Feeding endangers your family and neighbors as it lures coyotes into neighborhoods.
- Keep unattended cats and dogs indoors or in completely enclosed runs, especially at night, and do not assume that a fence will keep a coyote out of your backyard.
- Accompany your leashed pet outside. If it is dark make sure you turn outside lights on to check your backyard for unexpected wildlife.
- Keep dogs on short leashes while walking outside; the Division of Wildlife recommends a leash no longer than six feet.
- Leave noisemakers such as whistles and horns on hand to scare away coyotes that may enter your yard.
- Yell, clap hands, blow a whistle and try to make yourself look larger if you have a close encounter with a coyote.