



For the Love of Leash!



Photo credit: Ann Brokelman

We all enjoy exploring the outdoors with our family pets, and we want to keep our pets safe, while respecting and enjoying nature. **Using a leash is the best way to achieve this!**

This fact sheet provides helpful suggestions to create awareness about our wild neighbours and to keep family pets and wildlife safe in the great outdoors.

Did You Know?

- Our pet dogs are part of the Canidae family, which also includes wolves, foxes, coyotes, and jackals. All canids are curious, and some domestic dogs are driven by instinct to explore and to chase or kill wildlife. Leashing up prevents negative encounters between our off-leash dogs and wildlife.
- Coyotes and other wildlife are protective of family members and may perceive domestic dogs as a threat or danger.
- Findings from a Canadian study showed that 92% of dog-coyote conflict occurred when dogs were off-leash.¹
- Conflict often occurs near coyote den sites or in established coyote territory; however, many dog walkers are unaware of these dens and territories. You may frequent these spaces daily, without even realizing it!
- It is not uncommon for a coyote to 'escort' or 'shadow' a dog walker out of an area when pups or a den are nearby.
- Allowing dogs to chase or harass wildlife is illegal in most areas. Wildlife harassment incites conflict between species and alters the natural behaviours of wild animals, causing them to venture outside of their territories and expend vital energy unnecessarily.
- Free-roaming pets can encounter a wide range of dangers, including vehicles, other animals, or ill-willed individuals. In Ontario, traps and snares can be set in wild spaces with no markers or signage. Many dogs are reported to have been exposed to toxic products, poisons, or sick animals when off-leash.

Tips for Keeping Family Pets Safe

- Get to know the wildlife in areas where you walk your family pets. There may be fascinating species in your neighbourhood that you aren't even aware of!
- Always obey signage regarding nature and the bylaws or ordinances that apply to the wild spaces you visit.
- Keep a safe and respectful distance if you see a coyote, fox, or wolf.
- Never feed wildlife. This includes indirect feeding, such as leaving food waste in wild spaces. Wildlife feeding disrupts natural foraging behaviours and encourages an unnatural proximity tolerance to people.
- If a coyote is in the area and a dog is off-leash, immediately leash up. Keep your dog close. Small dogs can be lifted and carried for safety.
- Never run from any canid (wild or domestic). Leave the area slowly, keeping your dog close to you.

¹Shelley M. Alexander & Michael S. Quinn (2011): Coyote (*Canis latrans*) Interactions With Humans and Pets Reported in the Canadian Print Media (1995–2010), *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, 16:5, 345-359, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2011.599050>