

SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY

HUMANE COYOTE & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE BRIEF FOR THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1,000+ RESIDENTS ARE ASKING ORANGE COUNTY TO ACT.

Coyotes are part of Southern California. The problem is not their existence.

The problem is what happens when normal coexistence stops working - and residents discover there is no clear system to respond.

THE GAP

South Orange County residents encountering **threatening, severely habituated, sick, injured or suffering coyotes** can be left navigating multiple agencies without knowing who is responsible or whether anyone will respond.

In one recent case, a severely ill coyote was lying in a residential front yard. Calls were made to **Animal Control, OC Animal Care, and a wildlife rehabilitation organization.**

THREE CALLS. THREE RESOURCES. NO PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE.

Residents should not have to determine which government agency has jurisdiction while an animal is suffering or a public-safety situation is escalating.

THE SOLUTION

ONE CENTRAL REPORTING SYSTEM

Every incident documented in one regional system.

BEHAVIOR-BASED ESCALATION

Normal sightings are not treated like threatening encounters. Repeated approaches, pet attacks and dangerous behavior are tracked and escalated using established criteria.

REGIONAL HOTSPOT TRACKING

Incidents are mapped across city boundaries so repeated conflicts are recognized as patterns rather than isolated calls.

PROFESSIONAL TRIAGE & RESPONSE

Healthy wildlife is left alone. Concerning behavior, attacks, serious illness and suffering receive appropriate professional assessment.

WILDLIFE HEALTH & DISEASE MONITORING

Severely sick or diseased wildlife reports are connected geographically so potential clusters can be professionally evaluated.

ONE CLEAR CHAIN OF RESPONSIBILITY

Residents report the problem once. The system determines who responds.

ONE CALL -> ONE REPORT -> PROFESSIONAL TRIAGE -> APPROPRIATE DISPATCH -> DOCUMENTED OUTCOME

WHAT THIS IS NOT

This is not a request to eradicate coyotes. It is not indiscriminate trapping or killing, nor automatic removal after every sighting or pet encounter. It is a request for **qualified professionals to make appropriate decisions using established safety, wildlife-health and animal-welfare criteria.**

THE ASK TO THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Direct County staff to formally evaluate the current coyote-response system and service gaps in South Orange County, review this proposed regional framework, and return to the Board with recommendations for establishing and funding a coordinated South Orange County Humane Coyote & Wildlife Management Program.

COEXISTENCE REQUIRES MANAGEMENT. DOING NOTHING IS NOT A MANAGEMENT PLAN.

Rachel Serruya
South Orange County Resident & Petition Organizer

1,000+ petition signatures and growing
Full 10-page proposed regional framework attached.

SCAN TO VIEW THE PETITION - 1,000+ SIGNATURES



c.org/bThcLgxcVy

HUMANE COYOTE & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

PROPOSED REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

PURPOSE

We are asking South Orange County cities and Orange County to establish and adequately fund a coordinated regional coyote-management program for communities that currently lack dedicated wildlife resources and clear response protocols.

The goal is not to eradicate coyotes from our communities.

Coyotes are part of Southern California's ecosystem, and normal coyote activity should be managed through responsible coexistence, education, attractant reduction and appropriate deterrence.

However, coexistence must also include a meaningful response when coyotes become severely sick or injured, increasingly habituated to humans, repeatedly approach or threaten people or pets, attack domestic animals or people, or otherwise demonstrate behavior presenting an escalating public-safety concern.

Different situations require different responses.

A healthy coyote passing through its habitat should not be treated the same way as a severely diseased coyote suffering in a residential yard.

A coyote that sees a person and retreats should not be treated the same way as one that repeatedly approaches or follows people and their pets.

A report of a coyote attacking a pet or person should not be treated the same way as an ordinary sighting.

The purpose of this program is to create the infrastructure necessary to document, assess, track, respond and appropriately escalate different types of human-wildlife conflict.

WHY I STARTED THIS INITIATIVE

I started this effort because coyote conflicts are no longer an abstract wildlife issue for me.

They have begun to affect my everyday life, my ability to safely walk my dogs in my own neighborhood and my confidence that there is an effective system in place when residents encounter wildlife that is threatening, severely ill or suffering.

In approximately four months of living in my South Orange County neighborhood, I have personally experienced five separate coyote incidents on my street alone.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER

My first encounter was exactly what normal coexistence should look like.

I saw a very large coyote across the street from my front door. It continued on its way toward the horse trail, did not approach me and caused no conflict.

I have no problem with that coyote being there.

That distinction is important. This initiative is not about removing coyotes simply because residents see them. It is about recognizing when normal wildlife behavior becomes something different.

MY SECOND ENCOUNTER

My second encounter was captured by my Ring camera: a coyote visibly suffering from what appeared to be severe mange walking directly up my driveway.

MY THIRD ENCOUNTER

My third occurred while I was walking my two small Chihuahuas at the end of my cul-de-sac.

A coyote emerged from the bushes approximately 50 feet away and began moving rapidly toward us.

I yelled, screamed, picked up my dogs and fled because I believed we were in immediate danger of an attack.

MY FOURTH ENCOUNTER

During another walk with my dogs, I encountered a coyote in a residential yard that again began moving toward us.

I picked up my dogs, yelled and fled.

Experiences like these change how a resident lives in their own neighborhood. Walking my dogs should not require me to constantly anticipate whether I will encounter a coyote that keeps its distance or one that begins approaching us.

MY FIFTH ENCOUNTER

My fifth encounter involved another extremely ill coyote, visibly suffering from what appeared to be severe mange, lying in a neighbor's front yard.

I immediately began trying to find someone who could help.

I first called Animal Control and explained that there was a severely ill coyote lying in a residential front yard. I was told they could not do anything about the animal and that my option was to haze the coyote.

But asking a resident to frighten an animal that appears severely ill and is already lying down suffering did not feel like an appropriate solution - either for the resident or for the animal.

I then called OC Animal Care. I explained the situation again and was told they would not come out and that there was nothing they could do. I was given a number to call for Animal Control - the same resource I had already contacted.

Still trying to find help, I contacted the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center. I explained the situation for a third time and was told they could not assist because they do not handle coyotes.

THREE CALLS. THREE RESOURCES. NO PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE.

I had followed the available channels, explained that this was not simply a healthy coyote passing through the neighborhood and made clear that the animal appeared severely ill and was lying in a residential yard. Yet I reached the end of the process with nowhere else to turn.

Residents should not have to navigate a maze of agencies only to discover that no one appears responsible for responding.

This was also an animal-welfare and potential animal-health issue. Whatever the appropriate professional outcome would have been - assessment, monitoring, wildlife-health intervention, rehabilitation where legally appropriate, or humane euthanasia if the animal was beyond help - should be determined by qualified professionals.

Moving a suffering animal out of one person's front yard does not solve the problem. It only moves the problem somewhere else.

That is precisely why South Orange County needs a clearly defined system that tells residents who is responsible, who responds and what happens next.

AND THIS IS BIGGER THAN MY EXPERIENCE

I routinely hear air horns being used by neighbors to haze coyotes. Our neighborhood backs onto significant open space and coyote habitat, so seeing coyotes here is expected.

The problem is not simply that coyotes live here. The problem is what happens when normal coexistence stops working.

When coyotes repeatedly approach people and small pets rather than retreating, when pets are attacked or killed, when people experience threatening encounters, or when severely diseased wildlife is suffering in residential areas, residents need somewhere to turn.

My experience represents only one household on one street. The experiences being shared by residents throughout South Orange County are why I believe we need to determine the true scope of these conflicts and establish a coordinated regional solution.

THE STORIES THAT MADE ME REALIZE THIS IS BIGGER THAN ONE NEIGHBORHOOD

What ultimately compelled me to take action was not only what happened to me.

It was discovering how many other residents throughout South Orange County - and across Orange County - are describing remarkably similar experiences with coyotes.

For a long time, posts about coyotes have circulated through neighborhood forums such as Nextdoor. But recently, I have watched the number and seriousness of these conversations become increasingly difficult to ignore.

Post after post. Comment after comment. Neighborhood after neighborhood.

As of September 14, 2026, the petition has 900+ signatures from residents asking for a coordinated, humane response.

Residents describe coyotes approaching people and dogs without the level of fear or natural wariness they once expected.

They describe dogs and cats being chased, injured or killed.

They describe seeing coyotes that appear severely sick - animals with extensive hair loss, damaged skin, extreme weight loss and other visible signs of serious illness or suffering - walking through residential streets, driveways and yards.

Some residents are frightened for their pets. Others are frightened simply walking through their neighborhoods. Parents and grandparents express concern about children. People describe carrying air horns, whistles, sticks and other deterrents or changing when and where they walk because they no longer feel comfortable going outside unprepared.

But whether the report involves a concerning coyote encounter, a pet attack or a severely sick and suffering coyote, I keep seeing the same problem: residents do not know who will actually take responsibility for the situation.

People call Animal Control. They call animal-care agencies. They contact their cities or other organizations looking for help. And repeatedly, residents describe being told there is nothing that can be done, being instructed to haze the coyote, or being directed somewhere else.

That is particularly troubling when the coyote is visibly sick or suffering.

A severely ill coyote does not stop being sick because a resident scares it out of their yard.

Hazing may move that coyote down the street, into another yard or back into open space. It does not assess the animal's condition. It does not address its suffering. It does not determine whether professional intervention is appropriate. And it does not connect that report with other reports of similarly affected coyotes in the surrounding area.

Residents should not be expected to diagnose coyotes or decide what should happen to them.

But there should be a professional system responsible for receiving these reports, connecting repeated reports, assessing severely sick coyotes and determining the appropriate response.

The same principle applies when coyotes repeatedly approach people or pets, when pets are attacked, or when residents report behavior suggesting that coyotes are becoming increasingly comfortable around people.

Education, responsible pet ownership, attractant reduction and appropriate hazing all have an important role in living alongside coyotes.

But they cannot be the answer to every coyote situation.

A healthy coyote crossing a neighborhood and retreating from people is one thing. A coyote repeatedly approaching people or dogs is another. A coyote attacking a pet is another. And a severely sick coyote lying in a residential front yard suffering is another.

Those situations should not all receive the same response.

This is why what began with my own experiences has become something much larger to me.

I have realized that I am not the only resident asking: Who are we supposed to call when a coyote situation has gone beyond normal coexistence?

I am pursuing this initiative for the residents who are afraid to walk their dogs without carrying deterrents; for the families who have lost pets or experienced frightening encounters; for parents and grandparents concerned about children; for residents repeatedly seeing severely sick and suffering coyotes in their neighborhoods and being unable to find anyone who will come assess them; and for everyone who has made call after call looking for help only to be redirected, told nothing can be done or left wondering which agency is actually responsible.

This started with my own experiences and my own fear. But it is no longer only about me.

It is about giving residents throughout South Orange County a voice - and creating a coyote-management system that takes responsibility when normal coexistence stops working.

WHAT WE ARE PROPOSING

1. ONE CENTRALIZED REPORTING SYSTEM

Residents need one clearly identifiable system for reporting coyote incidents.

The reporting system should distinguish between:

- normal/routine sightings
- repeated residential activity
- coyotes approaching or following people
- coyotes approaching or following people with pets
- threatening or aggressive encounters
- attempted attacks on people

- confirmed attacks or bites
- attempted pet attacks
- pet injuries or deaths
- severely sick, injured or suffering coyotes

Reports should collect location, approximate time, observed behavior, photographs/video when available, pet involvement, apparent illness/injury and previous incidents. These reports should become part of a shared regional system rather than isolated calls that cannot easily be connected to one another.

2. REGIONAL MAPPING & HOTSPOT TRACKING

Reports should feed into a shared system capable of geographically identifying patterns. This would allow authorities to determine whether multiple reports from one neighborhood represent unrelated sightings or an emerging conflict hotspot.

Hotspot data could identify clusters of pet attacks, repeated threatening human encounters, areas with significant coyote habituation, attempted attacks, suspected disease or mange clusters, attractant problems, locations requiring coordinated deterrence and areas where conflict appears to be escalating.

Relevant information should be shared among participating jurisdictions and agencies rather than remaining fragmented across different cities and reporting systems.

3. HUMAN SAFETY & ATTACK RESPONSE

Human safety must be explicitly addressed within the program. A coyote simply being visible to a person is not inherently dangerous.

But approaching, following, charging, threatening or attacking people requires a different response.

The system should separately classify incidents involving repeated approaches toward people, following behavior, approaches involving people accompanied by pets, charging or lunging, attempted attacks, physical contact and confirmed bites or attacks.

An actual attack or bite should trigger the highest level of professional response, including appropriate public-safety, animal-control, wildlife and public-health involvement.

Physical contact, bites or scratches should also trigger appropriate public-health guidance because wildlife contact can present disease risks in addition to physical injury.

The system should not require someone to first be bitten before concerning behavior is escalated.

4. COMMUNITY SAFETY, FEAR & QUALITY OF LIFE

Coyote conflict affects a community even before a physical attack occurs.

Residents throughout our communities describe changing how they use their own neighborhoods because of repeated or increasingly concerning coyote encounters. Some report carrying air horns, whistles or other deterrents while walking, avoiding certain streets or walking times, closely guarding small pets, and feeling increasingly uncomfortable allowing children to play outdoors without heightened supervision.

These concerns should not be dismissed simply because an attack has not yet occurred.

Fear alone should not determine wildlife policy, but repeated behavior that causes residents to substantially alter ordinary activities should be recognized as an important indicator of community impact and evaluated alongside documented incident data.

Concern about children is particularly understandable. Coyote attacks on people remain uncommon, but children have been victims of documented coyote attacks in Southern California. CDFW guidance

specifically tells people encountering an approaching coyote to keep small children and pets close and use loud noise or noisemakers as deterrents.

The goal should not be to create fear of coyotes. It should be to ensure residents have confidence that when concerning behavior develops, there is a functioning system capable of identifying patterns and intervening before an incident becomes more serious.

Residents should be able to coexist with wildlife without feeling that they must live in constant fear of it.

5. PET ATTACK RESPONSE

Pet attacks should be treated as coyote-conflict incidents - not ordinary sightings.

When a coyote attacks, injures or kills a domestic animal, the incident should be formally documented. Relevant circumstances should include whether the pet was in a yard, walking with its owner, on or off leash, near its owner, approached by the coyote, or taken without a person nearby.

A single pet attack does not automatically mean a coyote should be killed. But it should become part of the documented behavioral history of that area and, when feasible, the animal involved.

6. REPEATED PET ATTACKS REQUIRE ESCALATION

When a neighborhood experiences repeated attacks, attempted attacks or increasingly bold interactions involving pets, professional response should escalate.

**SITE ASSESSMENT -> ATTRACTANT INVESTIGATION -> COORDINATED INTENSIVE HAZING / AVERSIVE CONDITIONING
-> INCREASED MONITORING -> IDENTIFICATION WHEN FEASIBLE -> PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT**

If a coyote repeatedly attacks pets, approaches pets in close proximity to owners, repeatedly follows people walking pets or continues serious conflict behavior despite intervention, qualified professionals should have a clear pathway for additional intervention, including lawful targeted removal when established behavior-based criteria are met.

This is fundamentally different from indiscriminate coyote removal.

7. ESTABLISH A BEHAVIOR-BASED ESCALATION SYSTEM

LEVEL 1 - NORMAL / COEXISTENCE

A coyote traveling through a neighborhood or open space, maintaining distance from people and retreating appropriately.

Response: Generally no intervention beyond education or routine monitoring where appropriate.

LEVEL 2 - INCREASING HABITUATION / RESIDENTIAL CONFLICT

Repeated lingering around occupied residential areas, repeated yard entry, reduced avoidance of humans or other concerning changes in behavior.

Response: Document behavior, investigate potential attractants, educate residents, initiate coordinated deterrence when appropriate and monitor.

LEVEL 3 - CONCERNING HUMAN/PET INTERACTION

Repeatedly approaching or following people or pets, moving aggressively toward them, repeatedly failing to retreat from appropriate deterrence or similar escalating behavior.

Response: Formal incident documentation, professional field assessment, intensive targeted deterrence and hotspot monitoring. Where feasible, attempts should be made to identify the animal or animals involved.

LEVEL 4 - SERIOUS CONFLICT / ATTACK

Pet attack or attempted attack; serious threatening interaction with a person; repeated charging/following behavior; or continued serious conflict despite previous intervention.

Response: Elevated professional investigation and rapid assessment of whether established criteria for targeted intervention or removal have been met.

LEVEL 5 - HUMAN ATTACK / IMMINENT PUBLIC- SAFETY THREAT

A coyote bites or attacks a person or displays behavior meeting professionally established criteria for an imminent public-safety threat.

Response: Immediate public-safety and wildlife response, with evaluation for targeted removal under applicable law.

The final definitions and thresholds should be developed or adopted from established standards by qualified wildlife professionals and relevant government agencies.

8. SICK, INJURED & DISEASED WILDLIFE: ANIMAL WELFARE AND DISEASE EXPOSURE

This should operate parallel to the public-safety behavioral system. A coyote does not need to threaten someone before warranting professional assessment.

Severely sick or diseased wildlife raises both an animal-welfare concern and a potential animal-health concern.

Wildlife can carry diseases and parasites capable of affecting other wildlife and, depending on the disease or parasite, domestic animals or people.

Sarcoptic mange is an important example.

Sarcoptic mange is caused by parasitic mites and can cause severe hair loss, skin damage, secondary infections, emaciation and significant suffering in affected wildlife.

For neighborhoods where domestic dogs regularly walk and live alongside areas frequented by coyotes, repeated reports of wildlife displaying severe signs consistent with mange should not simply disappear as unrelated individual calls.

They should be documented. They should be mapped. And when multiple severely affected animals are reported in the same geographic area, qualified wildlife-health professionals should determine whether the pattern warrants surveillance or further investigation.

We should not assume without professional assessment that every animal with hair loss has mange or that a particular coyote transmitted disease to a particular pet. That is exactly why professional assessment and disease surveillance matter.

A coyote displaying signs of severe disease, major injury, incapacitation, neurological abnormalities or significant suffering should trigger professional triage regardless of whether that animal has displayed aggressive behavior.

Qualified personnel should determine whether the appropriate response is monitoring, wildlife-health reporting, professional assessment, disease surveillance/testing where warranted, rehabilitation where legally appropriate and feasible, another authorized intervention, or humane euthanasia when an animal is suffering and cannot reasonably be helped.

Telling a resident simply to haze a severely diseased animal may move that animal from one property to another, but it does not assess its condition, address its suffering or determine whether a broader wildlife-health issue exists.

EXISTING CALIFORNIA AUTHORITY - IMPLEMENTATION NEEDED, NOT NEW LEGISLATION

California already provides a legal pathway for certain injured, diseased or orphaned wildlife to be temporarily confined and transferred under the direction of CDFW or a permitted wildlife rehabilitator. Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Section 679.2 became operative August 13, 2025.

Section 679.2(a) permits qualifying persons to temporarily confine an injured, diseased or orphaned wild animal for up to 24 hours for transfer to a permitted rehabilitator, a permitted designee or CDFW, subject to the regulation's conditions and exclusions. The regulation requires notification and provides for the animal to be released, temporarily confined, or transported as directed by CDFW or an authorized rehabilitator.

Section 679.2(a)(4) further provides that a lawfully trapped injured, diseased or orphaned wild mammal may be transported for rehabilitation. This does not mean every sick coyote can or should be captured or rehabilitated, and residents should never be expected to approach or handle a coyote. It means California law already contains a pathway that a coordinated local response system can use when qualified professionals determine it is appropriate.

The local gap is therefore not simply a lack of legal authority. It is the absence of a clear operational protocol connecting residents, Animal Control, OC Animal Care, CDFW, qualified wildlife professionals and permitted rehabilitators so that an appropriate state-authorized pathway can actually be used when circumstances warrant.

Source: Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 679.2; California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Rehabilitation Laws and Regulations (new regulations effective August 13, 2025).

9. DISEASE MONITORING & CLUSTER IDENTIFICATION

The centralized system should allow repeated reports of suspected disease to be connected geographically.

ONE SEVERELY AFFECTED COYOTE -> DOCUMENT THE REPORT

MULTIPLE SIMILAR REPORTS IN ONE AREA -> FLAG FOR PROFESSIONAL REVIEW

QUALIFIED WILDLIFE-HEALTH PERSONNEL -> DETERMINE WHETHER INVESTIGATION, SURVEILLANCE, TESTING OR INTERVENTION IS APPROPRIATE

This does not mean residents diagnose wildlife. It means residents report observations and professionals evaluate the data.

10. DEDICATED PROFESSIONAL WILDLIFE EXPERTISE

South Orange County needs reliable access to personnel specifically trained in urban coyote conflict and wildlife-health triage.

That could ultimately involve some combination of dedicated regional wildlife specialists, specially trained animal-control personnel, contracted qualified wildlife professionals and partnerships with appropriate county, state or federal agencies.

Higher-level cases should reach people who understand coyote behavior, habituation, deterrence, disease and appropriate intervention.

11. COORDINATED HAZING & AVERSIVE CONDITIONING

Residents have a role in maintaining coyotes' natural wariness of humans, and community hazing can be an important tool.

But asking individual residents to blow an air horn, yell or make themselves large cannot constitute the entirety of a government wildlife-management program.

When an area becomes an identified hotspot, coordinated intervention should be available before behavior progresses further, combined with attractant reduction and neighborhood education.

12. ATTRACTANT REDUCTION & PREVENTION

Prevention must be part of the solution.

The program should educate communities about reducing factors that can encourage coyotes to remain around residential areas, including accessible garbage, outdoor pet food, fallen fruit, intentional wildlife feeding and other food sources.

Participating cities should evaluate whether existing ordinances and enforcement mechanisms adequately address intentional feeding and other significant attractants.

13. TRACK OUTCOMES - NOT JUST CALLS

Success cannot simply be measured by how many reports an agency receives.

The program should track aggregate data including routine sightings; concerning human encounters; attempted or confirmed attacks on people; pet attacks, injuries and deaths; sick/injured wildlife reports; suspected disease clusters; identified conflict hotspots; professional field responses; coordinated deterrence actions; and cases escalating to targeted intervention or removal.

If public resources are being used to manage the problem, we should be able to determine whether the strategy is working.

14. ONE CLEAR CHAIN OF RESPONSIBILITY

A functioning regional program must establish exactly who is responsible for different types of incidents.

- Who evaluates the initial report?
- Who responds to a severely sick animal?
- Who investigates suspected disease clusters?
- Who investigates a pet attack?
- Who responds to threatening behavior toward a person?
- Who responds to an actual human attack?
- Who determines when behavior warrants escalation?
- Who has legal authority to remove an animal when necessary?
- Who tracks data across jurisdictional boundaries?
- Who follows up with the resident?

Residents should not be expected to understand the jurisdictional boundaries between municipal government, County government, animal control and state wildlife authorities simply to obtain an appropriate response.

15. BUILD THIS REGIONALLY

Coyotes do not recognize city boundaries.

An animal can move through several neighboring jurisdictions while reports concerning that animal or area potentially exist within completely different systems.

Rather than requiring every smaller South Orange County city to independently recreate an entire wildlife-management infrastructure, Orange County and interested municipalities should evaluate establishing a South Orange County Wildlife Conflict Management Program.

Potential participating jurisdictions could include communities such as San Juan Capistrano, Laguna Niguel, Dana Point, Mission Viejo, San Clemente and surrounding unincorporated communities, with actual participation determined by those jurisdictions.

PERSONNEL + EXPERTISE + REPORTING TECHNOLOGY + DATA + FIELD RESOURCES + WILDLIFE-HEALTH COORDINATION + EDUCATION + COSTS

16. DETERMINE THE ACTUAL COST - AND FUND IT

We are not asking residents to invent an arbitrary dollar amount.

We are asking elected officials and relevant agencies to determine:

- What resources already exist?
- What services are residents currently paying for?
- Where are the service gaps?
- What additional personnel or services are necessary?
- What would a coordinated regional program cost?
- What can participating municipalities contribute?
- What County resources are available?
- What appropriate state or federal funding or cooperative opportunities exist?
- Can participating jurisdictions share costs based upon population, service usage, incident volume or another equitable formula?

The appropriate agencies should then develop and publicly present a realistic implementation and funding proposal.

17. ONE COYOTE RESPONSE LINE & COORDINATED AGENCY DISPATCH

South Orange County should establish one dedicated coyote-response phone line and reporting system serving participating communities.

Residents should not be expected to determine whether an incident belongs to their city, Orange County, OC Animal Care/Animal Control, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), law enforcement, wildlife-health professionals or another organization.

Residents should make one call. The system should determine who responds.

Calls should be professionally triaged based on the nature and severity of the incident - including threatening behavior, human or pet attacks, significant habituation, and sick, injured or severely diseased coyotes - and then routed or dispatched to the appropriate agency or qualified professional.

Participating municipalities, Orange County, OC Animal Care/Animal Control, CDFW, public-safety agencies and appropriate wildlife professionals should establish clear responsibilities and communication protocols so cases can be transferred internally rather than sending residents from one phone number to another. For qualifying injured or diseased wildlife cases, that protocol should expressly incorporate the pathways authorized by Title 14 CCR § 679.2, including coordination with CDFW and permitted wildlife rehabilitators where legally appropriate and feasible.

Each qualifying report should also feed into the regional database so incidents can be mapped, connected to previous reports, tracked for emerging hotspots or disease patterns and followed through to an outcome.

ONE CALL -> ONE REPORT -> PROFESSIONAL TRIAGE -> APPROPRIATE DISPATCH -> DOCUMENTED OUTCOME

Residents should report the problem once. The system should coordinate the response.

For an immediate threat to human life or an active human attack, existing emergency services would remain the appropriate emergency channel.

THE TWO-TRACK RESPONSE SYSTEM

This is the heart of the program.

TRACK A - HUMAN & PET SAFETY

NORMAL COEXISTENCE -> INCREASING HABITUATION -> CONCERNING APPROACHES / FOLLOWING -> THREATENING BEHAVIOR -> ATTEMPTED ATTACK / PET ATTACK / SERIOUS CONFLICT -> HUMAN ATTACK OR ESTABLISHED DANGEROUS BEHAVIOR

Escalating professional intervention, including lawful targeted removal when warranted.

TRACK B - WILDLIFE HEALTH, DISEASE & WELFARE

HEALTHY WILDLIFE -> POSSIBLE ILLNESS / INJURY -> SIGNIFICANT DISEASE OR INJURY -> REPEATED DISEASE REPORTS / POTENTIAL GEOGRAPHIC CLUSTER -> SEVERE ILLNESS, INCAPACITATION OR SUFFERING

Professional assessment, wildlife-health surveillance and appropriate humane intervention.

An individual coyote could fall into either track - or both simultaneously.

The response should be determined by what the animal is actually doing and what condition it is actually in.

WHAT WE ARE NOT PROPOSING

- Eradication of coyotes from South Orange County.
- Indiscriminate trapping or killing.
- Automatic lethal removal following every pet attack.
- Assuming every coyote seen during daylight is dangerous.
- Capturing and rehabilitating every sick coyote.
- Asking residents to diagnose wildlife disease.
- Asking residents to determine which animals should be removed.
- Eliminating residents' responsibility to protect pets, remove attractants and coexist appropriately with healthy wildlife.

We are asking for qualified professionals to make appropriate decisions using established criteria.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING GOVERNMENT TO DO

- Assess the current problem and review available incident data.
- Assess the existing response system and identify jurisdictional and service gaps.
- Study established programs and models already operating elsewhere.
- Develop clear behavior-based response criteria.
- Develop and implement a sick, injured and diseased wildlife protocol that incorporates existing authority under Title 14 CCR § 679.2 and establishes clear coordination with CDFW and permitted wildlife rehabilitators.
- Establish wildlife-health and disease-surveillance procedures.
- Create centralized regional reporting and hotspot tracking.

- Establish the South Orange County Coyote Response Line and coordinated dispatch system.
- Determine staffing and professional expertise requirements.
- Develop a regional funding model.
- Establish measurable outcomes and public accountability.

And then: IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM.

THE CORE PRINCIPLE

We are not asking South Orange County to eliminate coyotes. We are asking our local governments to stop treating every coyote situation the same.

Healthy wildlife behaving normally should be allowed to live alongside us.

Increasing habituation should be addressed before it becomes dangerous.

Threatening encounters with people should be documented and taken seriously before someone has to be bitten for action to occur.

Pet attacks should be documented, investigated and connected to other incidents rather than treated as isolated events.

Sick, injured and severely diseased wildlife deserves professional assessment - not simply being moved from one property to another through hazing.

Potential disease patterns should be tracked so qualified professionals can determine whether a broader wildlife-health issue exists.

And when an individual coyote crosses established behavior-based safety thresholds, qualified professionals need the resources and authority to intervene - including lawful targeted removal when warranted.

COEXISTENCE REQUIRES MANAGEMENT. DOING NOTHING IS NOT A MANAGEMENT PLAN.

THE SPECIFIC ASK

Create and fund a coordinated South Orange County Humane Coyote & Wildlife Management Program that protects people and pets, treats wildlife humanely, responds appropriately to dangerous behavior, disease and animal suffering, implements existing state-authorized wildlife-response pathways where applicable, tracks emerging conflicts across jurisdictional boundaries, and gives residents one clear system to turn to when help is actually needed.

SELECTED RESIDENT TESTIMONY

SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY COYOTE & WILDLIFE CONCERNS

The following are selected public statements shared by residents in response to posts about local coyote incidents and the proposed regional program. They are presented as resident testimony and have not been independently verified by the petition organizer. Locations reflect the community labels shown with the residents' statements.

1. PUBLIC SAFETY / CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Sherry Saavedra — Irvine Center

"I saw a coyote's legs approaching from within, about five feet away. I slowly backed away and scooped up my smaller dog, only to turn and find a second coyote behind me, working with the first."

2. PUBLIC SAFETY / CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Tin Mo — Crystal Cay

"I was surrounded by 4 of them at night and they were not running away at all."

3. PET SAFETY / REPORTED ATTACK

Dixie Massaro — Central Dana Point

"Two coyotes in the canyon on Big Sur, DP, just attacked my dog. He got bit, but he's fine. I tried to scare off the coyotes, but they weren't intimidated at all."

4. HAZING / HABITUATION CONCERNS

Linda T. — Rancho Niguel

"The common advice we hear is to haze coyotes but they have become so accustomed to people that it has no effect on them... It's terrifying when you're with a small dog that you need to protect. We need better strategies for dealing with this problem."

5. QUALITY OF LIFE / FEAR

Linda Dominguez — Marina Hills, Laguna Niguel

"I am a nervous wreck just taking a walk to the park with my dog, with all of the coyotes around my home in Marina Hills."

6. QUALITY OF LIFE / FEAR

Taylor C. — Strand

"I personally don't have any stories other than seeing coyotes and being constantly terrified to walk around the neighborhood... hopefully we can make some changes around here."

7. SICK WILDLIFE / RESPONSE GAP

Kerry Collins — Capo Beach / North San Clemente

"It's been an ongoing thing with Animal Control and they tell us something different every time one of us calls. It's been active for the last 4 months while we tried to help to no avail."

8. SICK WILDLIFE / PROFESSIONAL RESPONSE

Elizabeth Denn — Harbor View Hills

"Earlier this year I notified [a wildlife responder] of a sick coyote in Irvine and he came out and treated it. Took him a few hours, but he found it."

9. SICK WILDLIFE / COMMUNITY EXPECTATION

Laurie M. — Rancho Cielo / Dove Canyon area

"What Animal Control did you call? They need to be reported. This is not your job to put this poor sick animal out of its misery."

10. BALANCED COEXISTENCE / RESPONSIBILITY

Susan O. — Costa Mesa

"I don't like coyotes, but I don't like seeing any animal suffer."

11. HAZING FAILURE / CHARGING ENCOUNTER

Peggy Kahn — Laguna Woods

"We live in Laguna Woods and now see coyotes nearly every day, any time of day, and they are afraid of no one. I have a 20 lb dog and we were stalked by a large healthy coyote. Yelling, pounding my stick and picking up my dog did nothing to scare this coyote. He charged us, and had I not had last-resort pepper gel in my pocket we would have been attacked."

12. SICK WILDLIFE / REPORTED PET ATTACK

Megan Kausch

"I have had multiple sick coyotes make dens in my backyard, napping and digging holes during the daytime. My neighbor's German Shepherd was circled by a pack of coyotes and attacked one night, surviving with cuts and gashes. Daily coyotes are walking down our streets with no concern about humans walking with them."

13. PET SAFETY / REPORTED ATTACKS

John Rapp

"The coyote problem is a problem throughout the State of California, and prominently in South Orange County. My dog was bit by a coyote and my next-door neighbor had their dog killed by a coyote while they were having a party in their backyard. It is a huge problem and desperately needs to be managed immediately."

14. BALANCED COEXISTENCE / HUMANE MANAGEMENT

Bethany Weeby

"Please help us safely and humanely coexist with our local coyote populations. With so much development, there are multiple daily sightings — sometimes interactions — in our neighborhood."

WHY THESE STATEMENTS MATTER

These accounts are not a substitute for verified County incident data. They demonstrate the kinds of concerns residents are reporting across multiple communities - close encounters, pet safety, apparent habituation, visibly sick wildlife, fear affecting daily life, and confusion about where to seek professional help. A centralized regional reporting system would allow these reports to be documented, professionally evaluated, mapped and tracked over time.