



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
&
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

For Immediate Release

December 2, 2008

Direct News Media Calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.

DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS

JOLIET – If you live in Will County, you have probably seen deer, coyotes, foxes, and other wildlife frolicking not far from your home.

Local population growth has reduced animal living space and forced wildlife to seek shelter in, or very near residential communities. Lee Schild D.V.M. believes animals and humans can still coexist peacefully, but he knows that humans need to make sure wild animals don't get too close.

"Wildlife can become more visible during winter and spring months," according to Schild, Will County Animal Control Administrator. "Food is more difficult for animals to find when temperatures drop and the snow flies. And, mating begins when winter concludes. During the next few months, it's important that people take steps to avoid potential problems with coyotes and all types of wildlife."

Schild urges area residents to refrain from feeding wild animals at all costs. Leaving food scraps near your home is an open invitation for coyotes, raccoons, skunks, opossums, foxes, and other potentially dangerous species. "Wild animals can carry dangerous diseases," Schild warned. "It's never a good idea to feed them. They pose special risks for people and pets."

Will County Animal Control urges area residents to keep pet food and water dishes inside – especially at night. To minimize potential conflicts between wildlife and household pets, make sure to turn on outside lights before letting small dogs or cats out of the house. Always survey the area before letting your pets outdoors, and don't leave them unsupervised for long. Dogs should be leashed when they're not in a fenced yard.

"Feeding wild animals can actually make them behave aggressively," Schild explained. "When you leave food scraps around, you teach animals that they will be rewarded for overcoming their natural fear of humans. Even small food scraps can attract foraging wild animals."

Coyotes are the most prevalent wild predators in greater Chicagoland. They help to balance local ecosystems by feeding on mice, rabbits, and other small animals. However, they also have been known to prey on unattended small dogs and cats.

Animal Control says small dogs should always be on a short leash when exploring open spaces. Coyotes are usually afraid of people, but may regard small dogs as a potential threat during the mating season.

For more information, telephone Will County Animal Control at (815) 462-5633.

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