

Introduction

I have worked in the animal medical field for nearly 20 years, the last eight of them as a veterinarian. I have graduate level training in animal behavior, animal training and zoo studies. I am silver level certified in low stress handling of animals. I have worked closely with multiple wild animal rehabilitators for the last decade and have treated Cook County Ambassador animals for the last 8 years. I have treated this coyote both in clinic and on site for the last four years. All of which makes me uniquely qualified to comment on this coyote's welfare, management and care.

What is right for this coyote

- This coyote has gone way past his crucial socialization period in captivity and has been irreversibly imprinted on humans. Effectively his caretakers are members of his social group, he is absolutely not in "social isolation".
- He does not need other coyotes to be happy. Coyotes in the wild, especially in more urban environments are often solitary. In the wild they do cover more ground - they have to in order to find food, shelter, avoid conflict with humans and other coyotes.
- This coyote has reached social maturity as an imprinted animal in captivity with his human caretakers being his surrogate conspecifics. He is ill-equipped to interact with other coyotes and would likely be a social outcast, which would jeopardize both his safety and his welfare. It would be detrimental for this coyote's health to be placed with other coyotes and taken away from his caretakers.
- This coyote is very well cared for, he is provided all he needs and offered enrichment daily. The caretakers at this and all the other Cook County nature centers do a wonderful job caring for the animals in their charge.
- It is not possible to diagnose an animal with chronic stress or clinical anxiety from a video clip, and it is also not legal in the state of Illinois to diagnose anything via telemedicine without a valid patient client relationship, which involves actually examining the animal in person or working closely with the veterinarian that has.
- To evaluate behaviors in an animal you need to first develop an ethogram, which is a collection of behaviors observed in the species or animal being studied, then observe them from a hidden location so as not to influence their behaviors and record how often they engage in each of their behaviors.
- Filming an animal cage side is not an appropriate method of gathering data for a suspected behavioral problem as you are interacting with the animal and changing its behavior.

Ambassador animals

- Cook County has done an outstanding job prioritizing the care of our **native** un-releasable wildlife and has never once denied them any of the medical care they needed in my eight years of working with them.
- Ambassador animals are so important, especially ambassador coyotes. Coyotes are often villainized by the public – people are often afraid of them. In the work I have done with wildlife rehabilitators in the area I have seen coyotes that have catastrophic injuries due to being shot, or becoming trapped in foot traps.
- When people do not have empathy for these animals it is easier for them to ignore what happens to these animals in the wild. It is very much an out of sight out of mind situation.
- This coyote has a very important job, he helps humans see wild coyotes in a different light, he encourages people to care about what happens to coyotes in the wild. I'm sure we can all agree that this charismatic coyote is very good at his job, he absolutely encourages people to care about him and by extension the species as a whole.

Placement for captive wildlife

- Placing non-releasable native wildlife is very difficult. Cook County historically has had placement for at least two coyotes at its very well run nature centers. These placements are absolutely critical for non-releasable coyotes, anything that takes away safe harbor for these animals is detrimental for coyotes as a whole.
- Many placeable healthy non-releasable animals are euthanized every year, it is so important that Cook County can continue to offer homes for non-releasable coyotes presently and in the future. Having to euthanize these beautiful animals that could live perfectly well in captivity is heartbreaking for the rehabbers and veterinarians involved in their care.
- Cook County is doing an amazing job caring for our native wildlife and educating people about their importance and I hope they will continue to do so indefinitely.