University of Wisconsin Urban Canid Project

We are requesting permission to live trap coyote and red fox (urban wild canids) in Madison Parks. In the immediate future we are interested in trapping in Owen, Hoyt and Reservoir Parks on the west side of Madison because we know of dens or consistent coyote and/or fox activity, but we would like permission to trap in all Madison Parks should we find consistent coyote or fox activity.

There are three main objectives to our study:

1) Understand the movement and activity patterns of urban wild canids in order to proactively manage potential conflicts between wild canids, people, and companion animals,
2) Understand the diseases urban wild canids carry or have been exposed to in order to understand disease transmission risk between wild canids and domestic animals, especially domestic dogs, and
3) Understand the competitive relationship between a predator (coyote) and prey (red fox) in an urban environment.

METHODS

We use cable restraints (live traps) to trap coyote and fox because these types of traps do not present any danger to humans who may come in contact with the trap, and if any off-leash dogs are trapped, they can be easily and safely extricated by their owners with no harm to the owner or pet. We follow best management trapping practices and abide by all trapping laws and regulations established by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR). Once the traps are set, they will be checked at least once every 24 hours.

Once an animal is caught, we control the animal using a pole noose and then administer an anesthetic via a syringe in the animal's hind leg. Anesthesia doses are ketamine 4-10 mgs/kg and xylazine 1.1-2.2 mgs/kg administered intramuscularly. Both anesthetics will be given at the same time in a single dose. After anesthesia is achieved, we monitor the animal's body temperature, heart rate and respiration rate at 15-minute intervals. If necessary, the animal will also be wrapped in a blanket to maintain body temperature. Once the animal is anesthetized, we draw up to 10 ml of blood from the front leg, swab the nasal passage and rectum, collect feces, and fit an Advanced Telemetry Systems radio collar (Model # M1950 for red fox and M2220B for coyote) around the animal's neck. Each collar is less than 1.5% of the animal's body weight. Depending on duration of anesthesia the animal may receive a reversal of yohimbine at a dosage of 0.1 mgs/kg intramuscularly. None of the trapped animals will be under anesthesia for more than 30 minutes, and we will monitor each anesthetized animal until it is fully awake and able to move under its own power. Our animal handling methods have been approved by the UW CALS Animal Care Use Committee (Protocol A01559) and we have a research permit from the WIDNR.

Once an animal is radio-collared and released, the animal will be picked up on the radio receiver 2-3 times within the first 5 days to ensure it is moving and alive. Following the initial five day period, each animal will be located via radio receiver at least once per week for the life of the radio collar (expected life is 2-3 years) or life of animal, whichever expires first. Our study will run through May 2018. For more information please see our Facebook page at UW urban canid project.