

NEWS

Expert says new breed emerging—coywolves

By Danielle Marr
Metroland Media Group

A string of deadly attacks on dogs in Caledon may not be the work of coyotes after all but rather a larger and more dangerous related species.

The Caledon Enterprise, sister paper to The IFP, showed images captured recently of a pack of what appear to be coyotes in Caledon to Bradley White, a leading geneticist at Trent University. He identified them as coywolves.

White, who was involved in the discovery of the coywolf, says the animal is a hybrid that emerged around a century ago after eastern wolves and western coyotes mated.

"This is a species that is evolving as we speak," he said.

The coywolf is larger and much more likely to travel in packs than the coyote.

"These larger ones will take deer, small livestock like goats and chickens, and certainly family pets if left on their own at peak (coywolf) activity hours, which are gener-

ally in early morning and late at night," said White. He believes they have appeared in residential areas, such as Caledon East because they are more adaptable to human territory than wolves or a typical coyote would be.

"They are not particularly aggressive but they are opportunistic creatures," he said. "They are adapting to life with humans around."

According to White, controlled culling programs with coyotes and coywolves have been tried a number of times, but the population rebounds quickly as animals move into the newly vacant habitat from surrounding areas.

"These guys have done well at adapting and they are not afraid of humans like wolves are," he said.

At least three dogs have been attacked and killed in Caledon in recent months and there have been numerous other sightings of what appear to be coyotes.

White advised keeping an eye on any house pets, but larger animals, such as horses or cows, are unlikely to be attacked.

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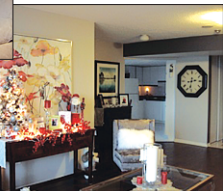
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