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THE SF/SPCA CAUTIONS PET OWNERS IN WAKE OF COYOTE ATTACKS

SAN FRANCISCO, JULY 18, 2007: San Francisco SPCA President Jan McHugh-Smith said today the shooting death of two coyotes in Golden Gate Park on Sunday probably resulted, regrettably, from the animals becoming habituated to humans. Two officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shot the two – a male and female – after a pair of coyotes attacked two leashed dogs in Speedway Meadows on Saturday, July 14. The California State Department of Fish and Game decided the coyotes were a risk to public safety and should be destroyed.

McHugh-Smith, who until recently was the CEO of the Humane Society of Boulder Valley in Colorado, said coyotes are common in Colorado. She noted the animals were usually skittish around humans and large dogs, and typically targeted small rodents, or cats. “Using a noise machine or shouting at the coyotes would frighten them away,” she added. She said when wildlife becomes habituated to humans, especially in an urban environment where people interact with them or feed them, their natural behaviors can be altered.

McHugh-Smith advised pet guardians not to feed wild animals, to exercise caution around them, and to keep their pets away from them; she noted the dogs involved in the incident were leashed at the time of the attack, in compliance with the law. She urged cat guardians to follow The SF/SPCA recommendation to keep their cats indoors at all times.

A spokesman for Fish and Game said officials cannot be completely sure the two coyotes that were shot were the same pair responsible for the dog attack. Several other coyotes have been sighted in different areas of San Francisco, including Bernal Heights and the Presidio.

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