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# Is it a coyote, or a coywolf?

As might have been expected, county council last week returned the coyote problem back to General Government Services Committee and county staff to work with Dufferin Federation of Agriculture in drafting a new bylaw for the council's consideration in November.

The county does have a bylaw on the books to control ?bad? coyotes. But the Predator Control Bylaw it does have is being invalidated by the withdrawal of the Ministry of Natural Resources from predator coyote control.

Federation president Bill McCutcheon had called the problem to the Committee's and county staff's attention last month when he outlined the losses of livestock that had occurred in Dufferin, including at his own sheep ranch in the town of Grand Valley, over the past three years.

(The Town of Grand Valley is the former Township of East Luther Grand Valley.)

The Committee simply received Mr. McCutcheon's report and passed it along to the council for consideration.

Mr. McCutcheon told this newspaper last week that the Federation is not seeking eradication of the species but that ?lethal? control is intended to be used only as a last resort. Once a coyote becomes a predator on livestock it's hard to break the habit. He said the Federation respects the balance of nature, by which the coyotes would live on their natural diet of field mice and such.

But coyotes ? if that's what they truly are ? have recently become a problem in urban centres such as Toronto as well, where they have been reported to have attacked pets and posed a threat to children.

But Wikipedia draws a distinction between the pure coyotes of the Western Plains, which are not natural predators, and the larger Eastern Coyotes. In fact, it says the Eastern variety of the ?coyote? is actually a Coywolf, a hybrid of the two species coyote and wolf.

How serious might the coyote/coywolf problem become?

On Oct. 28, 2009, folk-singer-songwriter Taylor Mitchell, 19, was attacked and killed by several of these animals while taking a pre-concert stroll in the Maritimes.

Following the death of the award-nominated Toronto native, Wikipedia reported that, ?In an interview with The Gazette, Brad White, a coyote expert at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario said they might have been coyote-wolf hybrids.

?However, Don Anderson, a biologist with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, said he has seen no reason to suspect the animals were coyote-wolf crosses. Don Anderson noted there are no wolves in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

?Dr. Brent Patterson of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, however, concludes there is sufficient physical evidence that these coyotes were so-called ?Eastern Coyotes.'

?Eastern Coyotes of the Canadian provinces are distant hybrids of Canadian wolves and coyotes that go back generations when the Western Coyotes of the North American Plains regions of the United States, migrated to the Ontario region, and interbred with native wolves,? Wikipedia reported.

Ms. Mitchell's case was only the second fatal coyote attack on a human ever recorded in North America. The first occurred in the United States in August 1981, when 3-year-old Kelly Keen was attacked by a coyote outside her home in Glendale, California, according to Wikipedia.

**By Wes Keller**