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Coyotes can present problems for rural residents and ranchers and farmers that raise livestock or poultry. Courtesy photo

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times Many a camper has heard the sound of the howl of a coyote on a quiet night in the great outdoors, and recently, a wildlife specialist with K-State educated some area residents about the high pitched noise coming from the lips of the animal.

Stevens County's Extension office played host last week to Charles Lee from the Manhattan school, and in addition to the coyote howl, the specialist also talked about the biology and behavior of the animal, the distribution of coyotes, the expansion of the species and the size of coyotes.

"Coyotes are smaller than people expect," Lee said.

According to sources, coyotes typically grow to 30 to 34 inches in length, not counting a tail of 12-16 inches, stand about 23 to 26 inches at the shoulder and weigh from 15 to 46 pounds.

As for the population of the species, Lee said the number of coyotes taken each year has increased by three fold since the 1980s.

"The species is largely unmanaged except when they're causing large damage," he said.

Lee said work is being done with farmers to implement livestock husbandry to manage those problems, but getting rid of coyotes is limited due to licensing laws for hunting and trapping the animal.

“You cannot hunt coyotes with a spotlight,” he said.

Lee added coyotes are very adaptable and opportunistic with no specific habitat.

“Humans are their primary mortality through means such as trapping, hunting and vehicles,” he said.

Internet sources also indicated that coyotes typically hunt in pairs, and they are primarily nocturnal. They can be seen during daylight hours, however.

The site also said coyotes primarily eat small mammals, such as voles, prairie dogs, eastern cottontails, ground squirrels and mice, though they will eat birds, snakes, lizards, deer, javelina and livestock. They will also target any species of bird that nests on the ground.

Lee said since coyotes are not at the top of the food chain, they do not have many predators other than wolves, and with no wolves in Kansas, the state sees little in the way of that problem.

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