



## Laguna Beach Police Department

### Animal Services

505 Forest Avenue

Laguna Beach CA 92651

(949) 497-0701

## Coyotes and Predatory Cats in Laguna Beach and Laguna Woods

### Coyotes:

Like most communities located in semi-rural areas, Laguna Beach and Laguna Woods have active coyote populations. Due to the brushy canyon areas and natural “den” type rock formations, our hillsides provide an attractive environment for coyotes and other animals. Numerous small wild animals in the area provide a plentiful natural food supply for coyotes and other predators; however, coyotes are very resourceful predators and have learned to follow man for a much easier and more palatable diet. Refuse in commercial and private garbage dumpsters, pet food, and domestic cats now comprise a large percent of the diet for the “Urban Coyote”. Garden plots, fruit trees, and golf courses offer additional incentives for these animals to move closer to humans. Some ill-informed citizens even leave food out for coyotes, raccoons, and other wildlife which, of course, escalates the problem.

Sightings of coyotes are reported regularly; however, these animals usually flee from humans. Usually the only threat coyotes pose is to pets that are allowed to run loose. Coyotes will eat dogs as well as cats, rabbits, and other small, accessible pets. Most attacks occur during the evening hours, but daytime incidents have been reported. Animal Services recommends that pets not be let outside during evening hours. Cats are at risk at all times and should be kept indoors completely. This is most crucial in areas that border undeveloped open space. Also, when pets roam without identification, Animal Services is unable to notify most pet owners of the fate of their missing pets.

When a pet disappears, it is often assumed to be a victim of a coyote, which is not always the case. Some raptor birds, such as owls and hawks, also will prey on small pets. It should be noted that many pets which “just disappear” are victims of car collisions. Many deceased animals that are picked up by their owners, or by Animal Services Officers, are victims of roadway accidents, poisonings, or other non-predator mishaps involving outside pets. A new threat to domestic pets is the research laboratory “Buncher” or “Head Hunter”. Pet theft is now a multi-million dollar a year industry.

At this time, the coyotes that inhabit our area don’t seem to pose any immediate threat to humans. If their behavior becomes more aggressive, or any real confrontations are reported, control methods include trapping, poisoning, and bounty hunting. Unfortunately, most of these methods are less than satisfactory. Often, when populations are reduced, the female coyotes respond by producing larger litters of pups and increasing the population. **The most** effective way of controlling this problem is to limit the food source. Keep garbage receptacles secured, and keep domestic pets inside, especially during evening hours. If this were done, fewer coyotes would be attracted to developed areas and would seek a more natural food source. Press releases and school programs are great ways to educate the public on wildlife issues and are an important part of our Animal Services program. Trapping coyotes to release them later is not an option, as there is no existing habitat available which is not already overpopulated with them.

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## **Mountain Lions:**

There has been an increase in sightings of mountain lions and bobcats in our area. Deer carcasses recovered by Animal Services Officers have indicated a predatory cat attack. These cats are known to reside in the area for years. As with the coyotes, there does not seem to be cause for alarm at this time. Laguna Beach / Laguna Woods Animal Services continues to monitor the situation in coordination with California Fish and Game, U.S. Geological Survey, and other wildlife management groups, and will report any changes that take place.

## **Things to Remember**

Many different types of animals call Laguna Beach and Laguna Woods home, ranging from Mule Deer, opossums, skunks, raccoons, weasels, marine mammals, birds, and snakes. If you have any concerns regarding the behavior of these animals, please call Laguna Beach / Laguna Woods Animal Services for further information, at (949) 497-0701.

1. Do not hike or walk alone -- especially at sunrise or sunset.
2. ALWAYS keep pets restrained when off of your property and inside during night time hours.
3. Make sure garbage cans are secured with lids, and other food and water sources are reduced or removed from outside areas.
4. Never leave food out for wild animals. Feeding wildlife causes animals to lose their natural sense of hunting and become dependent on humans for food. Animals may become aggressive, resulting in attacks or bites.
5. If confronted by Coyotes, Bobcats, or Mountain Lions
  - DO NOT turn and run from the animal.
  - Stay as tall as possible -- try to appear larger by raising your arms over your head
  - Waiving a jacket, a walking stick, or other item overhead may help
  - Keep small children next to you and try to pick them up without losing your height advantage.
  - Yell and shout at the animal to scare it off
  - Have a small object with you to throw at the animal, if yelling does not work

## **Additional Information Links**

California Department of Fish and Game, [www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov)

Humane Society of the United States, [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org)

American Humane Association, [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org)