



Idaho Department of Fish and Game NEWS RELEASE

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Safety tips when living in close proximity to mountain lions

Reports of mountain lions in the Wood River Valley continue to come in, almost daily, to Fish and Game. Most reports are about lions moving through neighborhoods or sightings of lions in yards. We also receive reports of cats recorded on security cameras. Since December 14, these reports have also included reports of 5 attacks on dogs, 3 fatal, in the Valley.

Understandably, residents and visitors are concerned.

Fish and Game managers share this concern, and are actively working to understand the current situation, and to provide safety tips and suggestions to those who live close to lions.

When living close to wildlife, no matter the species, residents and visitors need to be vigilant and aware of their surroundings.

Elk and deer populations are healthy in the Wood River Valley. Most like to see these animals where we live and as we recreate in the area. These abundant herds bring unintended consequences since they are also the natural prey base for mountain lions.

Personal safety

Mountain lions have been living in the Wood River Valley long before human development began. Most residents, even those who have lived there for years, have never observed one. However, we are hearing from residents that they are now seeing these secretive cats as they pass through their neighborhoods. Some reports include sightings of lions during daylight hours, which is not typical behavior.

Wildlife managers agree that if a person is in close proximity to a lion, meaning they see it, they should:

- NEVER run away from a mountain lion. The lion's instinct is to chase and ultimately catch what they perceive as a potential prey.
- NEVER turn your back on a lion. Always face them while making yourself look as large as you can. Yell loudly, but don't scream. A high-pitched scream may mimic the sound of a wounded animal.
- SLOWLY back away while maintaining eye contact with the lion.
- Safety equipment you may choose to carry could include bear spray, a noise device, like an air-horn, and if you walk in the dark, a very bright flashlight.
- If you are attacked, fight back!

Remember to use all of your senses to detect if a mountain lion is near. Using a light to help you see your surroundings is very important, both in your yard, or as you walk in your neighborhood. If you run

or bike for personal fitness, use caution when wearing headphones which take away your ability to hear if a lion, or any other wildlife, is giving you signals that you're too close.

Pet safety

Mountain lions are opportunistic predators, meaning they don't know when their next meal will happen, and will often attempt to take prey when it presents itself. A lion may perceive a pet as prey. To keep pets safe, owners are strongly encouraged to follow these safety tips:

- Keep your pets on a leash.
- Watch the pets' behavior, since they may sense the lion before you can actually see them.
- Do not feed your pet outside, or leave their food dishes outside. The mountain lion will not typically be attracted by the food, but the food could attract other wildlife that could be looked at as prey by a lion.
- Before letting your pet outside, turn on lights, make noise and look to ensure the yard is clear of wildlife. Do not assume that a privacy fence will exclude a mountain lion from your yard.
- Accompany your pet outside if possible.

Homeowner safety

By nature, mountain lions are shy and will make every effort to avoid contact with humans. Over the last several months it does appear there are some lions that have become more accustomed to living near Wood River Valley towns and neighborhoods. Homeowners can do several things to make it less likely that a mountain lion would pass through, or live near their homes and neighborhoods. These include:

- When leaving your house, be aware of your surroundings. Look and listen for signs of wildlife near your house.
- Do not feed wildlife! Elk and deer are the preferred prey for mountain lions. Un-naturally feeding elk and deer will bring in predators to the feed site.
- Strongly encourage your neighbors to not feed elk and deer. To effectively keep predators out of neighborhoods **everyone** must do their part.
- Do not leave your household garbage outside and unsecured. As with pet food, the garbage will not typically attract a mountain lion, but it might attract other wildlife that would be considered prey by a lion.
- Ensure that a lion cannot get under your patio or deck. These spaces can be a perfect location for a day-bed.
- Place covers over window-wells which can also be a place for a lion to use as a day-bed.
- Install motion-sensor lights which may discourage wildlife from staying in your yard. Lights can be directed to minimize impact on your neighbors.

Reporting mountain lion sightings and encounters

Wood River Valley residents and visitors should immediately report any encounter that results in an attack to the Magic Valley Regional Office at (208) 324-4359 during business hours, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday – Friday. Reports can also be made to the Blaine County Sheriff at (208) 788-5555. Mountain lion sightings and observations should be reported to the Fish and Game, Magic Valley Regional Office at (208) 324-4359.