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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Idaho Cougar Attack on Donkey

The Cougar Fund would like to express our regret over the miniature donkey that was attacked by a cougar in Horseshoe Bend, Idaho this week. When a cougar attacks livestock or pets, it is truly a sad situation, from the animal and his owner, to the individual cougar involved, to the species as a whole.

When keeping livestock or pets in cougar country, it is especially important to ensure animals are well secured and protected, to the greatest extent possible. While cougars do not prefer livestock or pets as prey, if left unprotected or improperly secured in their pens, there is a chance of attack by a cougar. Often, the offending cougar is subsequently trapped and/ or lethally removed, resulting in an unfortunate and unnecessary kill. It is ultimately in the hands of the individual landowner to prevent cougar conflict and advocate responsibility in cougar country.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife suggests stock be enclosed in “a chain-link or heavy woven wire fence that is 10 feet high with 3-foot extensions installed at a 65-degree angle on each post may keep cougars out of an enclosed area. To increase effectiveness, string barbed wire or four electric wires between the extensions, alternating positive and negative wires.”

Other safety precautions that should be taken include securing feed, closing off open spaces, keeping landscaping under control so that it cannot provide shelter for cougars, feeding pets in daylight if possible, and never feeding wildlife.

The Cougar Fund would also like to take this opportunity to remind people that cougar attacks on humans are very unusual occurrence even in a state like Idaho with a healthy cougar population of 2,000 to 3,000. Many western states, including Idaho, boast not only prime cougar habitat, but also significant concentrations of humans, with a rate of development to match the growing demands people place

on the local environment including roads and housing developments. Along with these factors comes the natural desire to recreate and live in the few nearby remaining wilderness areas. However, with this desire must come a circumspect awareness of the risks involved.

The only way to prevent future cougar conflicts—and the unnecessary killing cougars—is to take responsibility for oneself, stock and pets when living in cougar country. Keeping animals and property well secured will not only prevent deaths of stock and pets, but also of cougars. This unfortunate incident will hopefully serve as a reminder of the care we all must take to protect not only our animals, but also our wildlife.

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SAFETY IN COUGAR COUNTRY

Preventative Actions

- Be aware of your surroundings and recreate responsibly. Consider hiking, biking and running with others.
- Supervise children and do not leave them unattended, especially at dawn or dusk.
- Keep all garbage, pet food or food scraps indoors to avoid attracting prey.
- Keep pets and livestock in a secure area, especially at night.
- Install outdoor lighting where you walk after dark or install motion activated lighting.
- Do not feed wildlife. Predators follow Prey!
- Minimize vegetation in your yard where a cougar could hide and avoid planting foliage that attracts prey.
- Never approach a cougar!

ENCOUNTERING A COUGAR

- Stay clam and back away slowly. Do not turn your back, run or bend over.
- Avoid looking like prey. Try to make yourself appear as big as possible, make eye contact, open your jacket, raise your arms.
- If a lion is aggressive, throw rocks and sticks, yell as loud as you can. Always fight back and do not play dead.