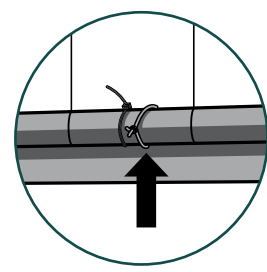




Safeguarding Pets in Cougar Habitat

TIPS TO CONSTRUCT A COUGAR-PROOF ENCLOSURE



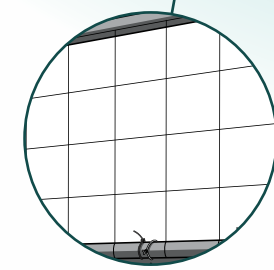
SECURE FENCING

Wrap metal wire every 4 inches to secure fencing to the enclosure's main infrastructure. This binds structure elements very strongly so there are no breaking points or large holes. Use 11-gauge or thicker metal wire.

Zip ties provide helpful short term support while constructing an enclosure. Zip ties can be used during a build to ensure placement, but they degrade over time. Secure with metal wire to complete the enclosure build.

SUGGESTED CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

- Dog Kennel & Roof Kit
- Metal Wire & Zip Ties
- Chain & Quicklink
- Horse Fencing
- Tarp Or Shade Cloth
- Gloves & Various Tools (Pliers, Wire Cutters, Wrenches, Post Pounder or Sledge Hammer)



CLOSE ALL GAPS

Cougars can fit through very small spaces. Gaps over 4 inches are possible entry points that need to be secured.

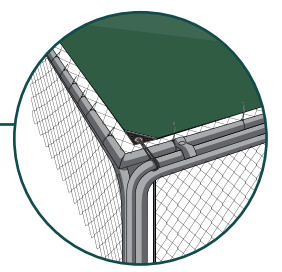


FLATTEN GROUND

Avoid building on uneven ground to optimize the structural integrity of the enclosure and its safety for your animals.

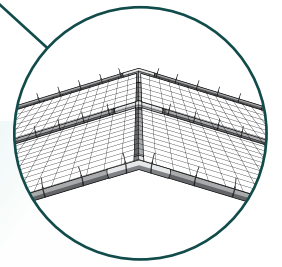
PROPER SECURITY

Secure enclosure doors with a welded chain and "quick link" lock, which can be easily opened and closed without keys or combination codes. Avoid using a padlock in wildfire-prone areas unless absolutely necessary for security purposes.



WEATHER-PROOFING

Animals need protection from the elements, so your enclosure should provide shade and some insulation.



ROOF STABILITY

The roof of the enclosure should be able to support a minimum weight of 200 pounds.

TRAINING TIP

Acquaint your animals with a new enclosure by coupling an auditory cue like a bell with their favorite treat, then pair the sound of the bell with your animal entering the enclosure.

Why Do I Need A Cougar-Proof Domestic Animal Enclosure?

Cougars (*Puma concolor*) are one of the most wide-ranging terrestrial species in the world and are found in 28 countries throughout the Americas. Cougars range from as far north as Alaska to as far south as Chile, but the species is thought to be in decline in some regions due to habitat loss and fragmentation, hunting, and retaliatory killings as a result of depredation events. ^[1]

Cougars are opportunistic hunters, which means they will take advantage of whatever opportunities arise to take down and consume prey. This means depredation can occur despite cougars having access to natural prey.

An improperly housed, vulnerable, and inexperienced domestic animal can represent an easy meal that can save a cougar much needed time, energy, and perceived risk. Cougars don't prefer domestic animals necessarily, but may prey on unprotected animals if given the opportunity. Avoid leaving free roaming domestic animals unattended as depredation can occur at any time of day or night.

A cougar that preys on domestic animals is not "bloodthirsty" or exhibiting abnormal behavior per se, but acting naturally under circumstances that are deeply unfortunate for the domestic animals and the humans that are responsible for their wellbeing, though they are preventable.

Practice good husbandry by housing animals in cougar-proof enclosures from dusk until dawn, during other low-light conditions, and when animals are unattended. Whether you are retrofitting an existing structure or building one from scratch, cougar-proofing a domestic animal enclosure is simple and well-worth the reasonable cost of supplies.

PRO-TIPS:

- To exclude coyotes and foxes, which can dig under enclosures, bury excess fencing 1 to 2 ft underground as a skirt around the enclosure.
- Avoid building enclosures near trees or structures, if you can. Cougars can use these features like ladders to access roofs and other entry points.

- T-Posts secure enclosure to the ground.
- Exclude climbing predators by using diamond-shaped chain-link fencing. The diamond design of chain-link is much more difficult for predators to climb than vertically-aligned fencing.
- Have sharp edges face outward on the enclosure to minimize the risk of injury to your animals. Wrap cloth around sharp edges on the outside of the enclosure.

- Clean Up: Use magnets to locate and remove metal shards. Enclosure construction can produce stray pieces of metal as a byproduct - take care to remove to prevent injuries.
- Where does the water run on the property? Identify where the water flows on the property and refrain from constructing in flood-prone areas.
- Build the enclosure within the 100 ft of defensible space around a home, if you are able.



Johanna Turner/ Cougarmagic

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION FROM COMMUNITIES:

DOES KILLING A COUGAR AFTER A DEPREDATION EVENT REDUCE CONFLICTS?

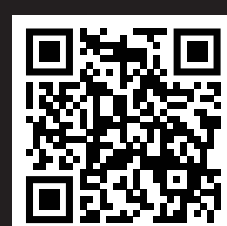
Killing cougars after a depredation event is not a long-term solution to conflicts with domestic animals. When depredation occurs, it is not because of a specific "bad actor." We know that all cougars hunt opportunistically and that unprotected domestic animals can present easier hunting opportunities than wild prey. The lethal removal of individual 'guilty' cougars will never prevent future conflicts because killing cougars doesn't fix the animal husbandry practices that allow depredation to occur.

ADVISORY

Please be advised that in some areas, authorization or permitting from a local government may be necessary before constructing a cougar-proof enclosure.

SEEK CONSULTATION

The efficacy of the tools described in this poster are situationally dependent and do not replace consulting with an expert. Consult with us for site-specific recommendations.



CONNECT WITH US & LEARN MORE

The Cougar Conservancy supports the community in living with cougars through a variety of coexistence programs. Learn more about enclosures online, sign up for a Cougar-Proof Enclosure Consultation, or consult with our team by heading to cougarconservancy.org/assistance.

[1] A depredation incident involving a cougar requires that a cougar is either immediately threatening to cause damage, in the act of causing damage, or one that has already caused damage to private property, including livestock and pets.