

# Pet or Prey?

It is a matter of perspective. Small dogs and cats have a different set of survival issues to deal with than big dogs. It seems that everyone and everything is out to get them. A recent report in the Albuquerque Journal tells of coyotes jumping a low wall and snatching two Chihuahuas from a yard in the Albuquerque foothills. “One dog was dropped and survived. The body of the second was found the next day.”

A surveillance tape from a home in the East Mountains shows a coyote jumping over a patio wall taking a Poodle from his owner’s home. In the east mountains, a family who adopted a dog from Chihuahua Rescue, gave another chilling report. Concerned by the sight of a coyote on their back patio one morning they were even more surprised to follow its gaze to the mountain lion reclining on top of their covered kennel run.

Puncture marks on the backs and sides of several small dogs and cats we have cared for suggest attacks by hawks or owls. Even Roadrunners have been known to take newborn kittens and small birds. Large birds of prey are able to capture and carry rabbits, prairie dogs, and other small wild animals. Small and young domestic animals are less wary and are easy prey.

Coyotes are not concerned about traveling into developed areas to look for food. They are opportunists and will seek whatever is easiest to find to fill their tummies. Leaving garbage, pet food, or fallen fruit available encourages repeat visits. An unlucky pet is just another part of their daily foray. Hawks and owls do nest in urban areas and compete for the same small prey as the coyote. Mountain lions are less likely to visit the city center, preferring less inhabited areas; open range and fringe housing developments.

Other dogs are a threat, as well. Several years ago one of Chihuahua Rescue’s first foster dogs was attacked by a neighbors Rottweiler. The foster was walking the dog on a leash in her own backyard when the Rottie jumped the gate of his fenced yard, came around the house, grabbed the little dog by the neck and gave a couple of hard shakes that broke her back.

We have had dozens of calls reporting their Chihuahua has been “stolen right out of our yard.” In some of those cases it has been human predators who have taken the family pet. Most often the owner does not see the theft but neighbors have. And, unfortunately, many people think that a dog without a collar and tags has been abandoned and do not try to find an owner. Most lost, small dogs are not returned without ID tags.



There are lots of things you can do to protect your pets from all of these predators, most successful is to keep them near you and in your sight whenever they are outside. Secure fencing to keep your pets in and others out is the next level of protection. Two to three foot wire extensions can be mounted angling outward at the top of walls. An innovative product called “Coyote Roller” is available through a company called Roll Guard. Information on their product is available by calling 619-977-6031 or [www.coyoteroller.com](http://www.coyoteroller.com). “Coyote Roller” is a cylindrical roller device that can be mounted on top of a variety of solid or wire fences to prevent animals from climbing.

Smaller enclosures can be covered with chainlink or wire mesh for extra security in keeping your pets in and predators out. To prevent predators from digging under a fence a wire mesh can be attached and anchored around the perimeter, or the fence should be buried at least six inches in the ground.

A high, solid wall, with a locked gate is the best defense against those who would steal your pet. Better yet, keep your four-legged friends safe from harm and secure in your home.

## Bad Things Come In Small Packages

Some of the smallest critters pose more of a threat to you and your pets than coyotes, hawk and thieves. Ticks, fleas, and mosquitos carry parasites and diseases such as: heartworm, tapeworm, ehrlichia, plague, rocky mountain spotted fever, and West Nile most of which infect humans, as well.

Animals shedding virus, bacteria, and tiny one celled animals that attack the stomach and intestines are commonly spread through coughs, sneezes, and drinking contaminated water. Even a pet licking it’s feet or fur, after passing through an infected area, can come down with life threatening diseases.

Most of these diseases are easily prevented, and may be cured, by vaccinations or treatments prescribed by your veterinarian. Young puppies and kittens are more at risk because they have lost the immunity provided by their mothers. Vaccinations and a wide range of parasite treatments are available. However, it is important to read the instructions carefully, products made for adult dogs can be harmful to cats or puppies.

Exotic pets transmit a wider range of diseases to you and your pets. Birds, rodents, and reptiles can bring a myriad of other critters to complicate your life. Pet shops that sell exotics can give you information about keeping them, and you, safe from the wilder side of pet ownership.

Contact your veterinarian to schedule an appointment to protect your pets from diseases common in New Mexico.

By Judy Babcock, Quixote Humane, Inc. /Photo by Pat Vasquez-Cunningham/Journal

The animals pictured below are only available for three days, but there are plenty of other choices! Visit the Valencia County Shelter, 1209 NM 314, one mile south of Main Street in Los Lunas. Open 8:00 am - 4:00 pm Tues - Sat. 866-2479