

## COUGAR PREDATION FACT SHEET



A cougar usually enters the abdominal cavity and eats the organs first. Normally the intestines and stomach are not eaten and are sometimes covered with debris. Coyotes and bears will also enter the cavity like this. Coyotes will eat the intestines & stomach.



A cougar will normally drag its prey from the kill site to another area to eat. Usually a cougar will pluck or shear (with its teeth) the hair from the abdomen before entering the cavity to eat the organs. After eating the organs cougars will feed on the hind quarters. Coyotes start at the rump.



Normally a cougar will kill its prey by biting the top of the neck and severing the spinal cord or biting the bottom or side of the neck to suffocate the animal or to sever the carotid artery. Normally there is very little blood when a cougar kills its prey. Often skinning back the neck area of the animal is the only way to determine the cause of death as bite marks are often not visible through the hair. The distance between the 2 upper canine teeth for a cougar is about 2 to 2 ½ inches. Anything narrower is probably coyote.



A cougar will cover its prey with debris after feeding and return at a later date to finish consuming the animal. However, scavengers such as coyotes may find and feed on the carcass.



The feeding pattern of a cougar consists of clean bites (as above) as a cougar will use either its incisor teeth or premolars when feeding on its prey. Normally a coyote will leave a rough feeding pattern as they often pull and tear the meat.

If you encounter a fresh kill, take swabs (Q-tips will do) of the bite wounds on the chance that predator DNA can be extracted from saliva left at the bite site. Send to R. Rosatte for analysis.

Check the area of the kill for scats and also submit them to R. Rosatte for DNA analysis. A cougar will often defecate near the feeding site.

When assessing a kill site check for drag marks, whether the prey has been killed by a bite to the neck, the feeding pattern, whether intestines have been consumed, whether the hair has been plucked or sheared and left beside the carcass, and whether the carcass is covered with debris. Also check for tracks at the kill site and photograph them with some sort of scale in the photo e.g. a ruler. Bears will often skin its prey whereas cougars do not.

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