

Neighborhood Watch Updates

The next Neighbor Watch Meeting will be in the fall 2013. The topic will be *Emergency Preparedness*.

Below is a recap of the recent Neighborhood Watch meeting:

Welcome & Updates

Farewell to Lisa McGuire ... and thanks for starting Neighborhood Watch 5 ½ years ago. You will be missed!

Welcome Scott Jakovich! Scott has been a NW Captain for the past 5 years and will now be Ridge NW Co-Coordinator.

Crime Stats for Bear Brand Ridge:

01/19/13 on Fairlane: Reported as "All Other Offenses" (12pm)

01/04/13 on Fairlane: Burglary, Breaking & Entering / Unlawful Entry (10:30am)

02/23/13 on Palisades: Aggravated Assault w/ Firearm (7pm)

Recent Crop of Home Invasions in Orange County

- Approximately 10-15 incidents are reported per day in Laguna Niguel. Most of the incidents are for items stolen from unlocked vehicles. *** Always lock your car doors ***
- Typically involves 2 assailants ages 16-24 years old in the daytime while homeowners are away. Entry is through rear window (breaking glass if necessary). Basically a drug-fueled "Smash & Grab"; items taken are those that are easily pawned, like jewelry, prescription drugs, cash, etc.
- Most robberies occur Monday through Thursday, between 10am and 7pm in residential areas; nights are rare. First suspect knocks on door acting as a solicitor while second suspect enters backyard to gain entry if no one is home.
- Authorities arrested four members of suspected burglary ring that could be connected to as many as 100 break-ins in Yorba Linda.
- Sheriff recommends always locking doors and phoning in any suspicious behavior, particularly solicitors. If you're home alone during a break-in, call a 9-1-1 dispatcher and go into a bathroom and lock the door. Stay on the phone with the dispatcher. A home invasion is a priority call, so police officers will be there in a couple minutes. Yell to invaders that you've got a gun and/or have called the police; these individuals are not typically looking for confrontation.
- Self-defense measures are most effective when applied as preventive steps -- avoiding the crime in the first place. Installing cameras and alarms are a great way of deterring entry and capturing evidence should a crime occur.

Recent Rise in Coyote Sightings & Attack of Family Pets

Some of the highlights as explained by the Animal Services team are listed below. If you'd like more guidance on how to avoid an incident with a coyote, please take a moment to read the attached handout from Mission Viejo Animal Services or call them at 949-470-3045.

* Approximately 8 pets of Ridge homeowners have been attacked or killed by coyotes in the past six months. Most of the incidents have occurred on Fairlane, Whitecliff and Cameo Crest.

* The recent increase in coyote activity is likely due to a reduction in the wild rabbit population.

* Only 1% of the average coyote diet consists of domesticated animal kills. While true omnivores, their diet mostly consists of local vegetation, fruits, and rodents.

* Coyotes won't overpopulate an area and actually resist population control techniques (trapping, killing, etc.). Research shows that when aggressively controlled, coyotes will increase their breeding rate to compensate for any forced reductions in population, and will cut back breeding so to not overpopulate their territory.

* Coyotes are secretive animals and have been known to live in close proximity to dense human populations for long periods of time without ever being noticed. As coyotes become more brazen and less fearful of humans, we need to retrain them through a process of "hazing", defined as *a method that makes use of deterrents to move an animal out of an area or discourage an undesirable behavior or activity.*

Below are examples of good hazing:

1. *Stand tall, waive your arms and yell as you slowly approach the coyote.*
2. *Use noisemakers like whistles, air horns, bells, pots & pans banged together, etc.*
3. *Use humane projectiles like sticks, small rocks, cans, or tennis balls.*
4. *Try vinegar water sprayed from water guns or spray bottles, or just pepper spray.*
5. *Be vigilant: to change behavior the coyote must turn and leave the area.*

If a coyote has not been hazed before, it may not immediately run away. If this happens, increase your intensity and walk towards the coyote until it does. If it runs but then stops and turns, you should continue the hazing until it completely leaves the area, out of sight. This may take a few times to correct bad behavior, but it does work.

*Coyotes are highly athletic and very smart. They can easily scale a 6-foot block wall to enter a backyard if there's a reason to do so, such as gaining access to a loose pet that's seen as prey/food. That said, they are normally very skittish and will typically not act aggressively towards people. To help avoid inviting a coyote to enter your backyard, these recommendations were suggested:

1. *Avoid feeding pets outside, or at least, only leave food out for a brief time.*
2. *In dry conditions, remove water bowls from the outside when not being used by pets.*
3. *If you compost, use enclosed bins or compost meats or fish.*
4. *Remove fallen fruit (from yard vegetation) from the ground.*
5. *Keep trash in high-quality containers with tight fitting lids.*
6. *Clear brush and wood piles from your yard.*

* Always be careful! Never approach any animal that appears sick or injured, as they may strike-out in fear. On the whole, coyotes are harmless and will not attack people or pets, however if their food or water supply dwindles and they've lost their fear of humans, they will venture out looking for snacks.

*** If you walk your dog off-leash or at the end of long flexible leash, they become easy prey for a hungry coyote. Even larger dogs that stumble upon a den can be attacked by a mother coyote defending her cubs.**

Wishing you and your family a wonderful, fun and safe summer!

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