

Cougar Escape in Dayton, OH (2007)

Account by Tim Harrison, former Public Safety Officer

The cougar had been abandoned in a home in downtown Dayton, Ohio and had chewed thru a door to escape. The cat was loose for two weeks. Per witnesses and neighbors dogs and cats were mauled and killed. The morning of the capture the cougar was surprised by some neighborhood children and became aggressive and snarled.



The police and firefighters/paramedics that responded were immediately charged and attacked, and barely escaped being mauled by leaping into their cruisers and apparatus. They called the two closest zoos and museums for help but they were denied. They called my department and I responded with a bull rope and a dog snare....we had no dart rifles at that time.

The cougar charged a police officer as I pulled up and I threw the bull rope around the snarling cat's head. It immediately began to roll and claw at the rope and spun itself into some bushes. The cat rolled out of the rope and lunged at me with teeth and claws showing. I was lucky enough to grab a dog snare and side stepped the attack, catching the cat around the head and in the mouth.

I tossed the cougar onto the ground and another officer dog snared its back foot. We then had to carry the snarling cougar out of the fenced yard and down the street to the animal control van. In the process, the cougar peed all over me....and I felt like doing the same, I was that scared.

As usual with escaped dangerous pets, no one raised their hand and said, "can I have my cougar back?" We never found the owners and, as in most states, there were no licensing records for these animals. **It is almost always the law enforcement and fire department that are the first to respond to these calls.** Typically they have no training in how to handle these animals.



Having these dangerous animals in private hands is a life threatening issue for first responders and law enforcement officers.