

## Features



TOP

# Mountain Lion Sighted In South Missouri

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## Mountain Lion Sighted In South Missouri

*A ShowMe Times Report*

DNA testing of hair left on a fence positively identifies a cougar. WEST PLAINS – A tuft of hair left on a fence in Oregon County March 9 definitely belongs to a mountain lion, according to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC).

MDC Resource Scientist Jeff Beringer today released results of a DNA test on hair taken from a fence along Highway M, near the community of Rover. Beringer said Conservation Agent Jerry Elliott retrieved the hair after receiving a report from an area resident who saw the cougar run across the road.

The man told Elliott that a full-grown mountain lion ran across the road in front of him and got its hind leg caught as it attempted to jump a fence on the opposite side of the road. He said the animal struggled briefly before it escaped, leaving a tuft of hair the size of a cotton ball in the top strand of the barbwire fence.

When he arrived at the scene, Elliott placed the hair in an evidence bag. Subsequent testing at the University of Missouri positively identified the hair as coming from a mountain lion, *Puma concolor*.

Beringer said the University's laboratory does not have adequate reference material to evaluate the cat's possible relationship to mountain lions from different geographic areas.

“We want to find out as much as possible about where the animal might have come from,” said Beringer, “so we will send the remaining hair sample to a genetics lab in Montana to determine the cat’s likely origin.”

Beringer said that testing could take several weeks to months. This is the sixth verified mountain lion sighting in Missouri since late November and the 16th in modern times. In cases where carcasses have been available for examination, most have been young males. Young male mountain lions go in search of new territories when they mature. Beringer said MDC has no evidence to suggest that a breeding population of mountain lions exists in Missouri.

Mountain lions, also called cougars, panthers and pumas, were present in Missouri before pioneer settlement. The last documented Missouri mountain lion was killed in the Bootheel in 1927. The closest populations of mountain lions to Missouri are in South Dakota and a small population in northwest Nebraska. Beringer said that MDC has never stocked or released mountain lions in Missouri and has no plans to do so.

To report a sighting, physical evidence or other mountain-lion incident, contact a local MDC office or conservation agent, or email the Mountain Lion Response Team at [mountain.lion@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:mountain.lion@mdc.mo.gov).

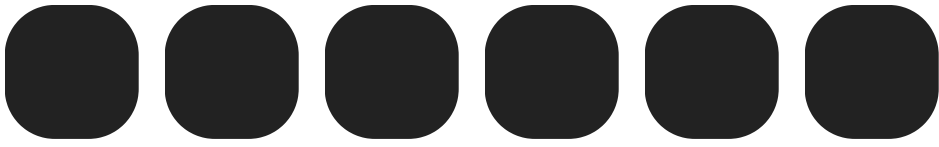
There have been no confirmed cases in Missouri of mountain lions attacking people, pets or livestock in modern times.

For more information on mountain lions in Missouri, visit [www.MissouriConservation.org](http://www.MissouriConservation.org) and search “mountain lion.”

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