

## Coyotes Suspected in Cat Disappearances

**Authorities say feline owners should closely monitor domestic pets.**

Posted: October 31, 2006, 5 a.m. EST

Cat owners in the St. Petersburg, Fla., area are being warned to keep an eye on their furry pets. Wildlife officers believe coyotes might be behind the disappearances of numerous area felines.

Rick Stahl, county urban wildlife officer, told the St. Petersburg Times that there are 75 to 80 coyotes wandering Pinellas County. Normally, cats are not coyotes' preferred meal, he said, but choices are limited in the urban environment.

"They're going to take the most easily available food source," Stahl told the Times.

Cats, especially pets, become prey because they're tame and tend to be more trusting and less alert to possible attack than wild animals.

After Thanksgiving, Pinellas County is expected to begin a two-year study on nine coyotes by capturing, fitting them with radio collars and then releasing and tracking them.