



Breaking ground.



San Pedro Going To the Dogs

■ **Animal Services breaks ground for modern new facility in San Pedro.**

Story and photos by Liz Montes, Club Counselor

The Harbor Animal Services Center groundbreaking ceremony took place Feb. 10. Several City representatives spoke about the new Animal Services Center to be completed in two years.

The new facility will have 79 kennels, a 750-square-foot community room, 40 parking spaces and a small animal area. The facility will also feature an animal get-acquainted area that will allow people to mingle with the animals. The center will enhance the quality of life for animals and help to find them new homes.

Construction of the new facility is being managed by the Bureau of Engineering.

Congratulations on the groundbreaking, Animal Services. It's going to be a great facility.



Rochelle Gonzalez, the Mayor's Harbor Representative for Neighborhood Operations.



Guerdon Stuckey, General Manager, Animal Services.



Councilmember 15th District Janice Hahn.



Valerie Lynne Shaw, President, Board of Public Works.



Gary Lee Moore, City Engineer.



Alan Espiritu, Project Manager, makes welcoming remarks.



John Reamer, Director, Bureau of Contract Administration.



From left: Lt. Michelle Roache, Lt. George Mossman, Lt. Ram Carnero and Captain Derek Brown.



From left: Hal Moore, Animal Care Technician Supervisor; and Julie McIntyre, Animal Care Technician.

The Pet Club

Curiously Cute ... And Against the Law

No doubt a number of *Alive!* readers saw the story on the news about the serval – an exotic cat that escaped in the Laurel Canyon area of West Los Angeles a few weeks back. There was a lot of media interest in the animal – because the cat is so exotic and also because of the danger it presented L.A.'s surrounding neighborhoods.

Although the serval had been raised as a pet (it had a collar and tag) and although it had been declawed (a painful procedure involving the permanent removal of an animal's nails), it was still a large predatory animal with enough sharp teeth and "wild" in it to endanger small children and pets. Even our own Animal Control Officers had to be very cautious handling the exotic cat.

So, what is a serval? It looks much like a bobcat. It is around three feet long and a foot and a half tall. The serval comes from Africa and is exotic to California. It looks almost comical with a head that's almost too small for its striped and spotted body. Still, this wild feline is graceful and is a sight to behold.

The serval story did come to a good end. Our department set out humane traps in the area where the cat was first seen and while it did not take the bait, it did manage to survive on its own. There were serious concerns that the serval might not be able to defend itself from other predatory wildlife because it had been declawed. Sitings were reported on and off throughout the exotic cat's trek from West L.A. to Studio City. Finally, a resident called the East Valley Shelter to report a large cat in her backyard. L.A. Animal Services immediately dispatched Officer Angela Jackson – a petite (and brave) Animal Control Officer who was able to single-handedly immobilize the scared creature using an Animal Control Device (a stick with a loop on the end). No one was hurt and the serval is doing well in a wildlife preserve where it can live out the rest of its days in comfort with other servals.

Other servals? Well, yes. Unfortunately, there are some very smart people who feel it's a good idea to smuggle, breed and keep these exotic animals as pets – you know, a good showoff and conversation piece – until the animal escapes and endangers the community.

To these folks, let it be known: It is against the law to keep predatory wildlife as pets. The Department of Fish & Game and the Department of Animal Services both require special wildlife and exotic permits to ensure that (1) exotic wildlife is treated well and kept in a suitable environment, and (2) that keepers of wildlife have the ability to keep the animals under control at all times and make sure the animals do not escape.

There's another law involving predatory wildlife that many choose to ignore: It is against the law to feed any predatory wildlife. Wild animals do not like to be around humans (we too are predators). However, when some well-intentioned person begins to feed wildlife, there is a tendency for the animal to lose its fear of man and become quite comfortable around our species. Animals accustomed to human hand-outs become dangerous not only to the feeder but also to the feeder's neighbors as well. This



could spell disaster for both people and the wild animal, causing possible harm and death to humans and condemning the wild animal to capture and death.

For safety, it is best to discourage wild animals such as servals, coyotes and bobcats from coming around your property. Here are a few ideas:

- Clear your area of excess vegetation to remove secluded hiding places.
- Do not leave pet food or water outside when your pet is indoors.
- Pick fruit from trees as soon as it ripens. Pick up all fallen fruit.
- Use fencing – at least six feet tall with the bottom extending 6 to 12 inches below ground level. Add an angle at the top of the fence facing. The angle should face outward at a 45-degree angle and should be at least 16 inches wide.
- Restrict feeding birds and squirrels. Predatory wildlife is attracted to these small animals as they are to the pets (and small children) in your yard.
- Keep small children and pets indoors.
- Never leave small children unattended.
- Should an animal come around, use noise and motion activated deterrents to make the animal uncomfortable. Try an air horn, a motion activated sprinkler or even an outdoor radio set to a news or talk station. Banging pans or other objects together to make as much noise as possible should also scare the animal away.
- If confronted with predatory wildlife, make yourself appear as large as possible and move away slowly.

For those who are curious as to the owner of the serval, he has signed the animal over to L.A. Animal Services. He is being very cooperative. Still, he does face criminal charges and, while that too makes a good conversation piece, I have a feeling our serval owner would rather it not be the case. He's also probably realized that keeping predatory wildlife for a pet just isn't worth the risk.

Send Questions

Jackie David, Public Information Director, L.A. Animal Services

Feel free to send questions and concerns to me, and I'll be happy to respond to them in my column. I'm excited about this, so don't hesitate! Write to me at: talkback@cityemployeesclub.com

