

Germs and Parasites

We hate to bring this up, but we know the topic holds a compelling fascination for many dogs on the trails at San Elijo. When dogs visit the reserve, they inevitably feel the need to heed nature's call. But left in place, those "calling cards" become biological time bombs, just waiting to unleash their virulent pathogens on unsuspecting dogs that can't resist stopping to check out the message. This is how some serious bacterial infections get transmitted, as well as several different types of intestinal parasites. This doesn't just affect dogs. Other wildlife is also endangered by the germs and parasites contained in dog droppings.

It doesn't stop there. Other dogs and people sometimes step in fresh dog droppings and then track the filth into their cars and homes.

Dog droppings along the trail contribute to excessive bacteria that upset the natural ecology. It pollutes the water of the lagoon and ocean, and increases the incidence of beach closures by the County Health Department.

Of course, dog droppings along the trail have a very negative aesthetic impact on others attempting to enjoy a walk or jog in the reserve.

Don't be a party pooper – have your droppings picked up and properly disposed of.

San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve

has been set aside as a refuge for native plants and animals that once spread freely over our hills, canyons, and marshes. Please help keep it clean, safe, and healthy for all wildlife including you.

Dogs and Cats in the Reserve

Rules, Regulations, and Common Courtesy

Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times. No free-roaming dogs allowed.

*Protects dogs from off-trail dangers
Protects other trail users
Avoids potential injuries and lawsuits
Protects native animals from being harmed
Protects native plants from being trampled
Avoids a citation for breaking a county parks regulation*

Pick up after your dog and properly dispose of the waste.

*Prevents the transmission of diseases and parasites
Protects others from stepping in your dog's droppings
Protects the habitat from high levels of bacteria
Improves water quality in lagoon and ocean
Enhances the aesthetic value to all users*

Keep cats inside or in your yard. They are NOT a natural part of the reserve's ecosystem

Doubles the average life expectancy of your cat.

Provided by
San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy
www.sanelijo.org | 760.436.3944



Dogs and Cats at San Elijo Lagoon



Many dogs and cats enjoy visiting the wonderful natural open space of the San Elijo Lagoon.

What's not to love? After a week of loafing around the house, a trip to the lagoon promises a lot of excitement.

Dogs especially seem to enjoy the intriguing scents wafting over the chaparral-covered hillsides. There's the expectation of exciting nature discoveries around every turn. And past treks have always resulted in chance reunions with old trail buddies, or stimulating encounters with some potential new friends. A trot along the trail provides the opportunity to rub up against the sagebrush for an intoxicating infusion of rich earthy smells. Of course, it's always fun to leave a mark for later trekkers to take note of the passage of such a noble beast.

Cats, of course, are a little less open about their excursions into the reserve. They also enjoy the stimulating scents, of course, but seem particularly moved by the opportunity to test their primal skills as hunters.

Dangers Lurk

As fun as the prospect of a carefree romp in the reserve might sound, dogs and cats should be aware that serious threats abound. A little knowledge of the potential dangers, and some commonsense precautions to follow, can help avoid serious injuries and illness.

Rattlesnakes

Lots of western diamondback **rattlesnakes** live in the reserve. People see them along the trail occasionally, but generally the snakes are off trail in the chaparral. Dogs probing in the bushes are bitten by rattlesnakes every year in San Diego County. The results are often very sad. The snakes' venom has a greater impact on dogs as opposed to humans, because of their smaller size. After snakebite, dogs often aren't able to get back to knowledgeable and caring humans in time for medical intervention. Even with timely medical help, a dog's recovery from a snakebite is not assured and can be very expensive for the one paying the bills.

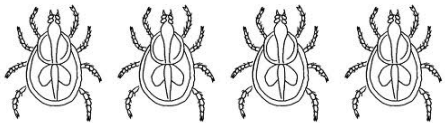
Avoid snakebites by keeping on leash and staying on marked trails.



Ticks

Ticks may be part of the natural order of things in the reserve, but most dogs and cats would consider them disgusting little blood-suckers. Ticks are everywhere in the dense chaparral. They lie in wait at the tips of the bushes for an unsuspecting host to brush by, and then they hitch a ride and enjoy a meal. One of the 49 species of ticks found in California transmits Lyme disease, and several cases have been reported in San Diego. All ticks feed by imbedding their mouthparts into the skin and gorging on the blood of its victim. The sores can become infected, leading to expensive vet bills.

Avoid ticks by staying on trail and getting a good brushing and examination after your walk



Poison Oak

Dogs don't really care about **poison oak**. It doesn't seem to bother them a bit. The problem is that when they brush against the plant while moving through the underbrush (searching for more rabbits?), the oily resins get on their fur. Back home they may rub against or get petted by people sensitive to poison oak (most of us), and the resins are transferred. Someone then gets a mysterious and very nasty red rash. The good news is that poison oak only grows off trail at San Elijo, so good dogs NEVER get in trouble by bringing it home on their fur.

Don't come in contact with poison oak. Resist the temptation to go off trail looking for rabbits



Burs and Foxtails

Cocklebur is a shrub that grows along the marsh. Its burs are a little less than an inch long, shaped like an olive pit, and covered with tiny hooks. It's the natural prototype for Velcro. Cockleburs attach to anything passing by and hitch a ride a further down the trail. This is how their seeds are dispersed and the plant expands its range. If a person carefully pulled out a cocklebur from their socks and tangled it up in their hair, they'd know what dogs go through all the time. **Foxtails** are what we call the seed heads of certain grasses. They break loose and stick on clothes, or maybe the hair hanging down around a dog's long floppy ears. Once in place, a foxtail works its way forward in one direction. It can't back up, and people have to pull it through their clothing to get rid of it. The problem for dogs is the pointy end can get started working its way up into the ear or nasal canal or into the soft skin between the toes. It takes some serious work (often under anesthesia) by a good vet to extricate a well-entrenched foxtail.

Avoid cockleburs and foxtails by sticking to the trail. Get checked out after your walk to remove all offending hitchhikers.



Skunks

Cute little black and white striped mammals with bushy black tails, **skunks** remind dogs of those next door cats that always stay maddingly out-of-reach. Of course they're going to chase them if they get the chance... Bad idea. How many people have ever had to drive home with their dog after it had an encounter with a cute little skunk?

Milk or tomato baths are embarrassing for a strong husky dog like you. Stay on your leash and avoid temptations.



Coyotes

Coyotes eat a lot of things, but they are especially fond of small and medium sized mammals. Domestic cats have very little chance to escape a coyote if they're caught out in the reserve. Most average-sized dogs could avoid an encounter with the generally cautious coyote by simply turning away. But many dogs have not learned that lesson. Depending on their size, dogs may have a better chance of surviving a fight with a coyote, but they almost always will emerge with serious wounds.

Don't give coyotes a chance to stray from their recommended diet of mice, rabbits, and berries. Stay on your leash and in the company of your two-legged companion.

