Use of rat poison in Los Angeles parks may be banned

By Rick Orlov, Los Angeles Daily News
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A coalition of environmentalists and wildlife activists joined forces on Monday to protest the use of rat poison in city parks and open spaces that they say is endangering wildlife in the region.

Displaying pictures of a mountain lion known as P22, which has been tagged and tracked for years, authorities said the poison has weakened the animal. The photographs show a malnourished animal that might be suffering from mange and other diseases.

Members of the City Council’s Arts, Parks, Health, Aging and River Committee called for a report on how the city can change its policy on rat poison, which has been found in local coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions and birds that feeds on rats and ground squirrels.

“We are in an era where sustainability is the name of the game,” Councilman Mitch O’Farrell said. “We need to have a balance of animals where there is a much healthier way to approach our ecology.”

O’Farrell asked for feedback on various options regarding the elimination of all rodenticides. Along with Councilman Tom LaBonge, he urged the department to report on how it can take a different approach to urban parks as opposed to large open areas such as Griffith Park and the Santa Monica Mountains.

Professor Laurel Serieys of UCLA presented findings showing a dramatic increase in the deaths of bobcats and mountain lions due to mange and other problems as a result of the rodenticides.

Councilman Paul Koretz pointed out that rat poison has become the top cause of death for animals in these large areas, eliminating wildlife that feeds on the ground squirrels.

“We need to stop poisoning them,” Koretz said. “In our ecologically sensitive areas, we need to find a way that doesn’t destroy everything else.”

Officials from Malibu and other cities said they have begun eliminating use of rat poison and are looking at other ways to control rodents.

Recreation and Parks officials said they follow the guidelines of the county Department of Agriculture and vector control and has strict guidelines on the use of rodenticides and mechanical traps for gophers, rats and mice.

Members of a group called Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW) was on hand and also urged the city to abandon the use of all rat poisons at its facilities.