

There was a recent story on our local TV news programs about two dogs that were gored to death by javelinas (pronounced hah-veleenas). In another case, a woman tourist filed a law suit against Saguaro National Forest because she was severely bitten while playing golf on a local course by a mother javelina.

Not many people outside of Mexico and the U.S. Southwest know about these desert animals. They closely resemble hairy, wild pigs, but are actually a rodent species. And they can be very bad-tempered when aroused.



Since we moved to Southern Arizona, we've encounter them frequently on jogging and hiking trails, or sometimes in the trash can areas behind hotels and apartment houses. The adults are about the size of medium dogs, weigh 50 plus pounds, and have sharp javelin-type teeth and pointed hooves. They frequently travel as families, with two adults and three or four juveniles, and sometimes in larger groups.

When meeting them close up, especially if they're adult females with young, we slowly back away. They usually won't attack humans unless suddenly startled and perceive danger to their young. If it happens, the only choice for us is to run away as fast as possible. The javelinas usually will not follow, but if you're ever confronted by an angry one, don't bet on it.