



## Bear Facts

**Don't attract bears.** Bears have a keen sense of smell, and garbage or other food sources could easily attract bears to your neighborhood. If we eat it or our animals eat it, bears will eat it too.

**Moving or destroying bears is not the answer.** Each year over 50 bears are trapped and relocated. Many of these are black bears, which have to be destroyed to protect the public.

As more people and more garbage move into traditional bear habitat, more bears are becoming garbage conditioned and once that occurs, they typically have to be killed. It's a terrible waste of life. It is also very costly.

Bears which are moved away may return, and others may starve to death. Bears can travel hundreds of miles to return to known food sources. Other bears are chased from their new surroundings by resident bears.

In communities like St. Ignatius and Hot Springs, which have streams and riparian areas running through town and are situated at the base of mountain ranges, the bear problems can last all summer.

**Working together to prevent bear problems.** Tribal Division of Fish, Wildlife, Recreation and Conservation is doing more than responding to bear human conflicts. They are encouraging people to be responsible for garbage and other bear

attractants to prevent problems from occurring in the first place.

### **Don't attract bears to your neighborhood.**

If you have a bear frequenting your area in search of food, make sure all attractants are properly secured. The majority of bear calls revolve around bear attractants.

Bears remember where they have found a food source. Once fed, a bear will return time after time, year after year.

#### **Bear Attractants:**

- 'People Food'
- Barbeque
- Trash
- Fruit Trees
- Livestock and poultry
- Bee hives
- Pet/Livestock Food
- Wildlife feed mixes
- Game meat
- Gardens
- Compost piles
- Bird feeders

Here are some simple common sense tips to avoid or reduce bear conflict:

#### **People Food**

Do not leave foods outside unattended, particularly at night. Barbeque grills should be kept clean and in a secure building, garage or shed when not in use. Do not keep refrigerators or freezers outside if you live in bear country!

#### **Trash**

Keep all trash including aluminum cans in a secure building, garage or shed. Do not keep garbage in the back of a pick-up truck. If bear resistant cans are not an option, using temporary electric fences around where you store trash will prevent conflicts (Murdochs and Cenex have easy install, step-in net fences). Put out trash the day of pick-up. Republic Services has a bear resistant garbage can service. When funding is available the CSKT Wildlife Program has self-haul bear resistant garbage cans available. Call for availability.

#### **Fruit Trees**

Pick fruit as it becomes ripe and remove any fruit on the ground. Store all picked fruit inside a secure building, garage or shed. Electric fencing is very effective if properly constructed.

#### **Livestock & Poultry**

While most large livestock (horses and adult cattle) are relatively safe, sheep, pigs, llamas and poultry (chickens, geese and turkeys) are especially vulnerable.

If they are not part of your livelihood, consider not keeping them. If you do have them, be sure to keep all feeds secured, clean up after birth, and remove any dead animals immediately. Electric fencing is very effective in keeping bears out of corrals and coops if properly constructed.

## **Livestock & Poultry Feeds**

Especially attractive are horse pellets, 3-way (corn, oats and barley mixed with molasses), cracked corn and oats, creep feed and chicken scratch. Store all feeds in metal containers with lock down lids (55 gallon drums work well) inside a secure building, garage or shed. Feed in a bucket or tub so that you can remove and secure any uneaten food. Do not place these feeds out for other wildlife species.

## **Pet Food**

If your pets are allowed in the house, feed them in the house. If they are outside pets, feed only during the day, and feed only the amount the animal eats in a single feeding. Bring the bowls in at night so there is no uneaten food left outside.

## **Wildlife Feed Mixes**

*Feeding wildlife in Montana is illegal!* Wildlife feeds are very similar to livestock feeds and are very attractive to bears. If you are feeding one species of wildlife, you are feeding several. Deer in your yard can attract mountain lions to your yard.

## **Wild Game Meat**

Butcher it quickly. If you harvest an animal, butcher it as soon as possible. If you hang it, do so in a secure building, garage or shed or at least 10 feet high and 4 feet out from any support the bear may try to climb. Do not leave scraps, hide or head around.

## **Vegetable & Flower Gardens**

Most gardens are not bothered by bears, however, they will dig up

and eat carrots and some flower bulbs. Do not use blood meal.

Electric fencing is very effective when properly constructed and maintained (vegetation does not touch the wires).

## **Compost Piles**

Not recommended. Most compost piles become trash piles. If you do compost, be sure to stir and aerate the pile regularly to be sure that it is 'cooking'. Bear resistant containers are available.

## **Birdfeeders**

The best option is not to feed while bears are out (March - November) but if you do, hang the feeder(s) out of reach. This means at least 10 feet up and 4 feet out from the tree trunk or pole. Other options include bringing feeders in at night or only placing a cup of seed in the feeder per day, so if a bear finds it there is no food for it to get.

## **Public Information & Education**

More public information and education is needed to change public behavior about dealing with bear attractants.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes is also addressing other issues—reduction of human bear conflict through land use management, acquisition of undeveloped bear habitat and garbage management options.

The Tribes encourage the public to participate in land use decision making that promotes wise development.

## **If you see a bear in your community**

Remain calm. The bear is likely just passing through and, if it does not find food, will simply keep moving.

Make the bear's experience in your yard as unpleasant as possible by yelling from a window, banging pots and pans, or blowing an air horn to scare the bear away. Keep away from the bear and warn others to stay away. Bring children and pets indoors.

If the bear seems persistent or threatening, call Tribal Game Wardens.

Bears are naturally conditioned to remember easy sources of food. With their keen sense of smell, garbage may be easier to find than natural foods such as fish, berries, bugs, vegetation and wild meat. After one taste of trash from a backyard garbage can, a bear may forever associate residential areas with food.

## **Bear Problems**

If you are experiencing bear problems and you would like assistance to identify and secure attractants, or if you are interested in the electric fence specifications, please feel free to contact Tribal Wildlife Management Program or Tribal Conservation. It is far easier to prevent problems from starting than to change a bear's behavior afterward. You can contact us at 883-2888 for more information on bears. If you need a Game Warden call and please tell the dispatcher you have a bear problem:

**(406) 275-2774**