

Your Role

Prevention and cooperation! You can help manage the Commonwealth's black bear population by keeping your property clear of food attractants and **communicating with your neighbors** to resolve community bear concerns. Remember, it is illegal to deliberately feed bears on both public and private lands. Even the inadvertent feeding of problem bears is illegal. (4 VAC 15-40-282)

Respect the bear's space! If a bear is on or near your property, do not escalate the situation by approaching, crowding around, or chasing the bear. This also applies to bears that have climbed up a tree. The best thing you can do is **leave it alone**. Because bears are naturally afraid of humans, a bear that feels cornered will be looking for an escape route. By keeping people and pets away from the bear, you give it the best chance to come down from the tree and leave your property on its own.

Report unresolved problems or damage. If you experience a bear problem after taking appropriate steps of prevention, you may seek additional assistance by contacting the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries or local law enforcement.



The Department's Role

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has established nuisance bear guidelines that promote public safety, protect property, and conserve bear populations. Whenever possible, the Department's approach to managing problem bears encourages the coexistence of bears and humans. The specific response to nuisance bear problems is determined by public concerns, public safety, type and extent of damage, black bear biology, animal welfare, and available control methods.

When you call the Department, an employee will discuss the problem with you. In most cases, a telephone call will be all that is necessary to find successful solutions (usually the removal of attractants). At times, a Department employee may visit your property to discuss additional options.

For more information, please see our website:

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/>

Contact Numbers:

Game Warden Dispatch	(804) 367-1258
Charles City - Region 1	(804) 829-6580
Forest - Region 2	(434) 525-7522
Marion - Region 3	(276) 783-4860
Verona - Region 4	(540) 248-9360
Fredericksburg - Region 5	(540) 899-4169

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LIVING WITH BLACK BEARS IN VIRGINIA



YOU ARE IN BEAR COUNTRY

As Virginia's black bear population grows and expands, black bears are becoming an increasingly common sight across the Commonwealth. Additionally, human populations are also growing and spreading across most areas of Virginia.

Black bears and human populations commonly coexist in many parts of North America. Black bears occur throughout most of the Commonwealth, and residential areas of Virginia are encroaching into forested lands and habitats commonly used by wildlife.

Many people enjoy the opportunity to see bears in the wild. However, when human-related foods become available to bears, problems may occur.

Residents and visitors to Virginia can minimize negative interactions with bears by following some simple guidelines.

Let's work together to keep Virginia's wildlife truly wild!



Residential Bear Problems

Bears are highly adaptable, intelligent animals and may learn to associate human dwellings with food. Bears are attracted to residential areas by the smell of food around homes.

- ⌘ **The most common food attractants** are bird feeders, garbage, and pet food, but grills, livestock food, compost, and beehives can also attract bears.
- ⌘ **Residential bear problems may occur at any time of year**, but are more common when natural food supplies are limited, usually in spring or in years when nut and berry productions are low.
- ⌘ **Most common bear problems have simple solutions.** The typical problems involve turned-over garbage containers, trash littered across the yard, bears entering dog pens or coming onto porches to eat pet foods, or damaged birdfeeders. However, bears that learn to associate food with people can cause property damage in their search for food around houses.

If addressed quickly, problems are often resolved immediately. After a few failed attempts to find food, bears will usually leave the area and return to more normal wild food items.

If problems are ignored, property damage can not only get worse, but bears may lose their fear of humans. Bears habituated to humans pose public safety concerns and often need to be destroyed.

You Can Prevent Nuisance Bear Problems

Black bears have a natural fear of humans, are shy, and usually avoid people. However, bears may be attracted to food sources in residential areas.

- ⌘ **Secure your garbage:** Store garbage indoors, in a shed, in a garage, or in a bear-proof container.
- ⌘ **Put garbage out in the morning** of pickup, not the night before.
- ⌘ **Take trash to the dump frequently.**
- ⌘ **Pick up pet food:** Feed pets only what they will eat in a single feeding or feed them indoors. Remove the food bowl soon after pets finish. Pick up uneaten food. Do not leave food out overnight.
- ⌘ **Remove the bird feeder:** Bears consume seeds and nuts found in the wild, so bird feeders become a favored target for bears.
- ⌘ **Clean the outdoor grill often.**
- ⌘ **Do not put meat scraps or any other strong-smelling food in the compost pile.** Consider an enclosed compost bin.
- ⌘ **Pick up and remove ripe fruit** from fruit trees and surrounding grounds.
- ⌘ **Install electric fencing** to protect beehives, dumpsters, gardens, compost piles, or other potential food sources.
- ⌘ **Talk to your neighbors:** Make sure your neighbors and community are aware of the ways to prevent nuisance bear problems.

Feeding Bears is Illegal

Never Intentionally Feed a Bear