

Dealing With Bears in the Community

September 13, 2016

Public safety is important to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and police services across Ontario. Bears that come into a populated area aren't always a threat to public safety. Public safety is at risk when a bear poses an immediate threat to personal safety by exhibiting threatening or aggressive behaviour.

The ministry would like to thank the many people who are eliminating attractants in their communities. It takes only one property where attractants are not managed carefully to draw bears to a neighbourhood. Everyone must work together to keep bears in the wild where they belong.

This fact sheet tells you how to reduce your chances of attracting bears and what to do if you encounter a bear.

Reduce the chances of attracting bears. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry advises the public to:

- Store garbage in bear-resistant, airtight containers inside a storage area that is not accessible to bears.
- Wash garbage containers and dumpsters frequently using a strong disinfectant to reduce odours.
- Put out garbage on the morning of garbage collection, and not the night before.
- Do not leave pet food outdoors.
- Remove grease and food residue from barbecue grills, including the grease trap, after each use.
- Fill bird feeders only during the winter months.
- Do not put meat, fish or sweet food, including fruit, in your composter and turn compost regularly.
- Keep meat and fish scraps in the freezer until garbage collection day.
- Remove fruits and berries from trees as they ripen and do not leave them on the ground and bushes to rot.

If you encounter a bear:

- **Remain calm.** Often the bear is just passing through and, if it finds no food source, will simply move on. Residences may be located in or near natural bear habitat.
- **If a bear is in a tree, leave it alone.** Remove people and dogs from the area. The bear will come down and leave when it feels safe. This is usually after dark.
- Keep away from the bear, do not block its exit and warn others to keep away. Bring children and pets into the house.
- If near a building or car, get inside as a precaution. If the bear was attracted to food or garbage, make sure to remove these items after the bear leaves to discourage the bear from returning.
- Keep dogs away from bears. Uncontrolled dogs can lead bears back to people.
- If you have a problem with a bear, call the Bear Wise line toll-free at 1-866-514-2327. You will be connected directly with a live operator during bear season (April 1-Nov. 30).
- **If your personal safety is at risk, call 911 or your local police.**

If a bear approaches you:

- **Slowly back away, watching the bear.**
- If the bear tries to approach you, stop. Be aggressive and make yourself appear as big as possible. Yell and throw rocks or sticks. **Never turn and run.**
- Carry a noise-making device such as a whistle or air horn, and if necessary use it.
- If the bear continues to approach you, keep backing away slowly while acting aggressively towards the bear.
- If you are carrying bear repellent, use it only if the bear is attacking you or is extremely close to you (make sure you are familiar with the product and how to use it).
- Bear attacks are rare. If a bear attacks, do not play dead except in the rare instance when you are sure a mother bear is attacking you in defense of cubs. Fighting back is the best chance of persuading a bear to stop its attack. Use a large stick, a rock or anything else that you can to deter the bear.

QUICK FACTS:

- If a bear poses an immediate threat to public safety by exhibiting threatening or aggressive behaviour, call 911 or your local police.
- For advice on reducing bear attractants, call the ministry's Bear Wise reporting line toll-free at 1-866-514-2327; Hearing Impaired (TTY) 1-705-945-7641. You will be connected directly with a live operator during bear season (April 1-Nov. 30).
- Find out more about [what to do in emergency and non-emergency situations](#).
- Visit ontario.ca/bearwise for more information on bears.