

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Black Bear Response Guidelines

SUBJECT: Department of Energy and Environmental Protection response to public safety and property damage threats posed by black bears.

PURPOSE: To establish criteria for determining conditions wherein black bears pose a public safety or property damage threat and to establish response measures. The primary response measures are public education, collaboration with local public safety officials, and direct intervention (i.e., aversion conditioning, relocation, euthanasia).

POLICY: It is the policy of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to manage the black bear population to maximize ecological, economic and cultural benefits, while providing for public safety and property protection.

PROCEDURE: *Definition of Public Safety and Property Damage Threat* –Black bears, by virtue of their size and behavior have the potential to pose a public safety threat, and threat of property damage. These concerns increase as bears enter areas with higher human population density. To guide Department response to black bear/human conflicts, threats have been categorized by level of concern.

1. Category I

- a. Black bears causing no or minor property damage (e.g., to bird feeders, garbage cans) in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants present;
- b. Black bears causing no property damage in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants not present;
- c. Black bears causing minor property damage, first occurrence, in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants not present;
- d. Black bears damaging an unprotected apiary.

Response to Category I:

- a. Provide information on preventing conflicts (e.g. remove food attractants), and bear behavior and biology; and
- b. Refer interested citizens to DEEP internet site for additional information.

2. Category II

- a. Black bears causing minor property damage, repetitive occurrence, in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants not present;
- b. Black bears in areas without adjacent escape refugia;
- c. Black bears causing substantial property damage, first occurrence;
- d. Black bears causing damage to orchards or agricultural crops; first indication of damage;
- e. Black bears damaging a protected apiary; first occurrence;
- f. Black bears killing or maiming pets not under the control of their handler; or

- g. Black bears killing or maiming livestock not under protective controls¹.

Response to Category II:

- a. On-Site Aversion Conditioning – locations with suitable habitat within the vicinity; or
- b. Relocation and Aversion Conditioning – locations without suitable habitat in the vicinity.
Bear will be captured, ear-tagged, and transported to a suitable location for release.

3. Category III

- a. Black bears otherwise characterized as Category II but not exhibiting an aversion response to aversion conditioning;
- b. Black bears causing substantial property damage, repetitive occurrence;
- c. Black bears causing damage to orchards or agricultural crops; repetitive occurrence;
- d. Black bears entering a protected apiary; repetitive occurrence; or
- e. Black bears killing or maiming pets under the control of their handler.

Response to Category III: (from among below options based on judgment of EnCon/Wildlife staff on-site)

- a. Euthanasia: Following approval from the BNR Bureau Chief, Wildlife Division Director, or Bear Program Biologist; or
- b. Repeat of On-Site Aversion Conditioning – locations with suitable habitat within the vicinity; or
- c. Relocation and Aversion Conditioning – locations without suitable habitat in the vicinity.
Bear will be captured, ear-tagged, and transported to a suitable location for release.

4. Category IV

- a. Black bears killing or maiming livestock under protective controls²;
- b. Black bears exhibiting aggression toward humans;
- c. Black bears encountered while in, entering, or exiting, or otherwise known (i.e. an identifiable bear) to have entered commonly occupied areas of buildings (e.g., residential dwellings, office and commercial buildings; not to include accessory structures/garages whether attached or detached);
- d. Orphaned cubs less than six months old and less than 60 pounds; or
- e. Black bears displaying neurological, physical or biomechanical symptoms (lameness, inability to stand/walk, circling, excessive panting) associated with injury, disease, or physiological distress likely to result in the prolonged suffering and death of the animal.

Response to Category IV: Euthanasia - Decision made by EnCon/Wildlife staff on-site.

¹ 'Livestock under protective control' means cattle, horses, poultry, and similar animals kept for domestic use but not as pets, especially on a farm or ranch and restrained within a physical barrier (e.g., fenced pasture, paddock, corral, pound, pen, coup).

² For purposes of responding to black bears killing or maiming livestock under protective controls, bears observed killing or maiming, otherwise identified (e.g., observation of ear tags) as having killed or maimed, or captured within two days of the killing or maiming in areas of low black bear density may be euthanized; all others may be handled as a Category II animal.

Notification: In all cases that result in euthanizing a black bear, the highest ranking, on-site staff of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Police divisions shall collaborate to ensure that notification of the action is transmitted to Central Dispatch, and the Directors of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Police divisions, and the Director of the Office of Communications at the earliest possible opportunity.

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