

Tips for living safely in BEAR COUNTRY

Living in Wyoming provides residents with access to vast wild landscapes and an abundance of wildlife—including black bears and grizzly bears.

Homeowners living in areas occupied by bears may encounter related challenges, many of which can be mitigated by implementing appropriate safety measures. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department recommends the following best practices to reduce the potential of attracting bears to your property.

Bears are wild animals that follow their noses in search of their next meal. Because of this, bears may venture close to human development, seeking easy food rewards. Known as attractants, these food rewards are defined as anything that emits an odor or provides food that a bear can get into.

When bears start getting food rewards from humans, they can

Need help?

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department appreciates the efforts and sacrifices that the public makes to live safely in bear country. If you have a bear getting into attractants at or near your home, please notify your local Game and Fish office. For more information, visit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's website at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov>.

become food-conditioned. In other words, they learn that they can get easy calories at or near human development, which can change their behavior (generally they return time and time again).

Once bears become food-conditioned to human foods, their behavior can escalate to dangerous circumstances quickly. Common attractants in Wyoming include:

- Garbage
- Vegetable gardens
- Fruit trees
- Pets, livestock, and feed
- Bird feeders
- Barbecue grills and meat smokers
- Compost

Garbage

Garbage should be stored inside a secured, locked building until it can be hauled to an approved disposal site. Ideally this should be done as often as possible, or at least once a week, to avoid the buildup of odors. If you have a curbside trash service, ask your provider if there is a bear-resistant container option for your area.

When placing trash out for pickup in bear country, homeowners are encouraged to do so the morning of pickup, not the night before. This can be a minor inconvenience, but

it can truly help keep people and bears safe.

Gardens

Planting a garden in bear country requires special considerations. Bears attracted to your garden may dig up bulbs and forage on numerous types of garden plants like corn, carrots, or potatoes.

When planning a garden, select an area that provides good visibility and is away from wooded areas. Areas with a lot of trees or shrubs can provide bears with good coverage and allow them to move freely without being seen or noticed.

Building an electric fence around your garden is a highly effective way to deter bears and avoid giving them an easy food reward. Wyoming Game and Fish recommends the use of an electric fence around any gardening situation in areas inhabited by bears.

Fruit-producing trees and shrubs

Fruit trees can also be an attractant, especially in years when bears' natural food sources are less plentiful. When fruit falls and begins to rot, it produces a stronger smell, so it is best to remove fallen fruit right away. Collecting fruit before it has fallen is a simple way to minimize the appeal of this attractant.



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Any fruit-bearing trees or shrubs should be fenced. Some homeowners may choose to electrify their orchard as an added layer of protection. For more information on the best fencing methods for deterring bears, visit <https://bit.ly/wgfd-bear-wise>.

Pets and livestock

Pet and livestock owners should take special precautions to protect livestock and make feed unavailable to bears. Chickens, sheep, pigs, and goats can be easy prey for large carnivores in some parts of Wyoming, but most bears are seeking the feed for pets and livestock, not the animals themselves. Some of the common attractants associated with domesticated animals are chicken feed, horse cakes, cubes, oats, and dog or cat food.

To prevent conflicts, store all livestock and pet feed in a locked building or bear-resistant container. Only feed what the animals can consume in one sitting and avoid leaving food available overnight.

Homeowners with chickens should consider electrifying their chicken coop and run.

Birdfeeders

Attracting birds to your home with feeders is a popular way to view and enjoy many bird species found in Wyoming. Unfortunately, bird feeders can also be an attractant for both grizzly and black bears. Bird feeders, including hummingbird feeders, are not recommended in areas where bears may be present. If you seek good bird viewing opportunities at home, consider the use of a bird bath rather than feeders.

Barbeques

Barbecuing is a popular summertime activity that emits a great deal of aromatics that attract both humans and bears. The key to preventing conflicts with bears and barbeques is to properly store the grill in a locked secure building when not in use. If that is not possible, be sure to burn the grill

on high for 30 minutes and clean the drip tray after every use.

If you choose to use a smoker, try to avoid smoking overnight. Store your smoker, along with any pellets, in a locked secured building with your grill. The pellets used in smokers can also have an odor and may be considered an attractant.

Compost

Compost piles or bins can be an incredible bear attractant and the practice is not recommended in bear country. If you do compost, consider setting up an electric fence around the pile or using a bear-resistant container as a composter. Never put meat, grease, or bones of any kind in your compost pile as those items can magnify the odors that attract bears.

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