

# YOU LIVE IN BEAR COUNTRY



Black bears are an important part of Florida's natural heritage. Keeping bears wild and away from human use areas is a responsibility we all must share. FWC is dedicated to reducing conflicts between people and bears in your community.

Black bears are naturally shy, timid animals that try to avoid people. However, as human development expands, it becomes increasingly difficult for bears to avoid people.

## Why are bears in your neighborhood?

Bears are lured into neighborhoods when they find an easily accessible food source. Bears that become used to getting human foods may damage property or become a threat to public safety. Common items that attract bears into neighborhoods include:

- Garbage
- Food smells from barbecue grills, coolers, and outdoor freezers/refrigerators
- Animal feed (e.g., pet food, corn, grain, seed, bird seed, livestock feed)
- Gardens, compost piles, small or medium livestock (e.g., chickens, goats, pigs, rabbits)





Feeding bears, either by direct handouts or by leaving attractants such as garbage and pet food unsecured, causes bear conflicts and is against the law.

Florida Administrative Code 68A-4.001(4): "(a) Intentionally feeding bears is prohibited except as provided for in this Title. (b) Placing food or garbage, allowing the placement of food or garbage, or offering food or garbage that attracts bears and is likely to create or creates a nuisance is prohibited after receiving prior written notification from the Commission."

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

Remain calm and stay away from the bear. The mere presence of a black bear does not represent a problem. The bear is most likely just passing through and will not linger or return if it does not find a reward such as food. A bear may climb a tree to look for food or if it gets scared. Clear the area of people and pets and allow the bear to come down when it feels safe (usually after dark). The bear found its way into the area and it can find its way out.

## If you encounter a bear at close range...

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|  DO NOT play dead or run from the bear |  Avoid direct eye contact            |
|  Back away slowly with arms raised     |  Speak in a calm and assertive voice |

If you experience bear problems, please contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at 863-648-3200 or visit [MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear).

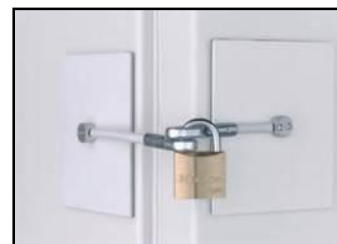
# What can you do about a bear near your home?



## Secure Your Attractants

The best way to avoid conflicts with bears is to secure anything that might attract a curious bear. The following suggestions may prevent bears from being attracted to and lingering in your neighborhood.

- Store your trashcan in a secure area, such as a sturdy shed or garage, and put it out on the MORNING of garbage pickup, NOT the night before.
- Get a commercially-manufactured bear-resistant trashcan that has been reinforced with metal and a push-to-open latching system.
  - If you do not have trash service, you can buy bear-resistant trashcans from several online retailers, including Ace Hardware, Lowe's, and Home Depot.
  - If you have trash service, ask for a bear-resistant trashcan. If they will not provide them, call your local government official. Enough citizens have taken action in some counties that they now have bear-resistant trashcans.
- Build a small shed to store your trashcans. Important elements are to leave no gaps along edges and use screws instead of nails.\* Call your waste service provider to ensure they will service trashcans from a shed.
- Attach hardware to your regular trashcan to make it more bear-resistant.\* For a 'retrofit' to be successful, the lid must not be flexible, and the can should not collapse when you stand on its side. Call your waste service provider for permission to 'retrofit' your trashcan.
- Clean grills and store them in a secure location, such as a sturdy shed or garage.
- Feed pets indoors or promptly remove leftover pet food and bowls for pets fed outside.
- Store animal food in a secure area; remove or modify\* wildlife feeders when bears are in the area.
- Protect gardens, compost piles, and livestock with electric fencing.\*
- Secure outdoor refrigerators and freezers with marine locks.



\*Instructions and more information available at [MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear)