



COS

Human-Black Bear (Family Unit) Conflict Response Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

An effective wildlife management strategy must balance the necessities of wildlife with those of the public. Protection of life and property is a priority, as is meeting objectives for black bear population management.

This guide provides a standard approach for determining an appropriate response to human-black bear family unit conflicts and will be applied throughout the Province, including provincial parks and protected areas. It is a resource for conservation officers who must act in situations of conflict where clear, concise, and consistent direction is needed. The guide supports Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (“FLNRORD”) Procedure, [4-7-04.01.1 -Preventing and Responding to Conflict with Large Carnivores](#), and is the result of collaboration between government biologists, conservation officers, park rangers, the Provincial Wildlife Veterinarian, and the ministry’s Human-Wildlife Conflict Manager.

This guide is also intended to explain to the public how human-black bear conflicts should be handled. Conservation officers will use the guide as a reference to communicate with stakeholders and the public about managing conflicts with black bears and to promote public and community support for black bear conservation.

This guide will be reviewed annually and revised as required.

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide will be applied to human-wildlife conflicts with a black bear family unit except for orphaned cubs of the year and the two protected sub-species of black bear, “Kermode” (white colour phase) and “Glacier” (blue colour phase) bears.

The Report All Poachers and Polluters (“RAPP”) Program offers a toll-free tip-line and web-based service that members of the public can use to report human-black bear interactions where public safety may be at risk. On average, the RAPP line receives 18,500 human-wildlife conflict reports (“HWCRs”) per year related to black bears. This guide will assist conservation officers with determining an appropriate response to these reports, which is based on an incident investigation including an assessment of the reported actions of the bears, the presence of humans near the occurrence location, and known conflict history.

Conservation officers will use the guide to categorize black bear family units into one of three different threat levels. Each category has recommended responses based on the public safety risk and effective conflict prevention actions. Category 1 bears are a serious threat to public safety and may have caused significant property damage and/or are injured or suffering from distressed health and require a conservation officer to respond. Category 2 bears may pose a threat to public safety or cause property damage and will result

in a conservation officer taking steps to manage the incident. Category 3 bears are exhibiting normal, natural behaviour and are assessed to have a low public safety risk. Conservation officers typically provide advice and education in response to Category 3 bears.

Black bears have known behavioural patterns, which, when combined with the bear's actions, incident location and proximity of humans, conflict history and other factors, may indicate an incident is highly probable. It is unlikely, however, that this guide will anticipate all possible situations. Nonetheless, where unusual or novel incidents arise, conservation officers will make decisions that most closely follow these guidelines. Furthermore, for any incident where an imminent threat to public safety exists, any appropriate and necessary action may be applied.

INVESTIGATION

HWCR's relating to human-black bear conflicts will be reviewed and categorized. Category 1 and 2 bears will be investigated by conservation officers. The aim of the investigation is to collect evidence, including witness reports and physical evidence that will provide an accurate account of the bear's actions, as well as any human activity involved.

Conservation officers should also be familiar with the following related directives:

- [CO Authority to Destroy Wildlife](#)
- [Wildlife Attack Response](#)
- [Human-Wildlife Conflict Reports \(HWCRs\)](#)
- [Houndsmen](#)
- [Atipamezole as Emergency Treatment for Medetomidine Exposure](#)
- [Responding to Grizzly Bear Conflicts - Destruction of Trapped Bears](#)
- [Media Contacts](#) and [Standard Messaging for Media Contacts](#) [includes messaging respecting attractant management, bear safety, RAPP and WildSafeBC]

CATEGORIES and RESPONSE

Category 1

Black bears in this category pose a serious threat to public safety, have caused significant property damage and/or are injured or suffering from distressed health. They include animals that have attacked, injured, killed or fed on a human and/or attacked, injured or killed a domestic pet or livestock. It may also include bears that have entered temporary or permanent dwellings. Bears that have previous conflict history and are deemed a threat to public safety will be included.

Category 1 Response Guidelines

Conservation officers will contact the complainant and conduct an investigation to determine an effective response to resolve the conflict. Bears involved in this category will be euthanized if the investigation determines that there is a serious threat to public safety, significant property damage has occurred, and/or the bear is injured or suffering from distressed health. Euthanasia will follow the Canadian Council on Animal Care's guidelines to ensure humane and efficient methods. Where possible, euthanasia will take place out of the public eye to minimize

risk to the public and stress on the animal. The following actions are to be used as a guide for conservation officers to determine an appropriate and consistent response to Category 1 black bear family units.

- Investigation
 - Assessed public safety risk
 - Assessed health as per animal welfare guidelines
 - Assessed known conflict history
 - Confirmed identification of offending animal(s)

- Prevention and Education
 - Provided safety information to the public
 - Provided attractant management and husbandry information to the public
 - Contacted FLNRORD Biologist/Veterinarian
 - Conducted media release to educate the community
 - Contacted WildSafeBC or local interest group to deliver education to the public
 - Contacted bylaw to assist with managing attractants
 - Direct livestock owner to / explain sections 2, 26(2) and 75 of the *Wildlife Act*
 - Contacted the Livestock Protection Program (“LPP”) (cattle and sheep only)

- Outcome
 - Enforcement action (warnings, Dangerous Wildlife Protection Order, charges)
 - Closed area to the public, post signs warning the public
 - Euthanized responsible animal(s) following Canadian Council on Animal Care guidelines
 - Resolved incident with other qualified responders (e.g., Police)
 - Destroyed by others
 - Attended - animal was gone on arrival
 - No capture efforts taken
 - Trap(s) set – capture
 - Trap(s) set – no capture
 - Removed or secured attractants
 - Deployed COS K-9 Unit
 - Immobilized animal(s)
 - Completed Wildlife Attack Report

Category 2

Black bears in this category may pose a threat to public safety or cause property damage. They include bears that have entered temporary or permanent dwellings; injured or killed a domestic pet or livestock; damaged property; followed, stalked or bluff charged a human; or accessed non-natural food and are food conditioned. They also include bears that are confined or treed; present on school, park or playground property; or found killing or feeding on natural prey or crops.

The majority of black bear HWCR's in British Columbia involve bears that on initial contact with communities have altered natural foraging behaviour in favour of man-made food sources. If attractants, bears, people and site are not successfully managed, the public safety risk will increase and the bears will likely become Category 1 bears.

Category 2 Response Guidelines

Conservation officers may provide technical advice or education. In some situations, officers may be required to conduct site visits to assess the public safety risk and manage people and the site. Non-lethal responses may be warranted for bears that are deemed healthy and early contact has occurred with a low level of conflict history with humans or property. The following actions are to be used as a guide for conservation officers to determine an appropriate and consistent response to Category 2 black bear family units.

- Investigation
 - Assessed public safety risk
 - Assessed health as per animal welfare guidelines
 - Assessed known conflict history
 - Confirmed identification of offending animal(s)

- Prevention and Education
 - Provided safety information to the public
 - Provided attractant management and husbandry information to the public
 - Contacted FLNRORD Biologist/Veterinarian
 - Conducted media release to educate the community
 - Contacted WildSafeBC or local interest group to deliver education to the public
 - Contacted bylaw to assist with managing attractants
 - Direct livestock owner to / explain sections 2, 26(2) and 75 of the *Wildlife Act*
 - Contacted the Livestock Protection Program (“LPP”) (i.e., cattle and sheep)

- Outcome
 - Enforcement action (warnings, Dangerous Wildlife Protection Order, charges)
 - Closed area to the public, post signs warning the public
 - Destroyed by others
 - Resolved incident with other qualified responders (e.g., Police)
 - Attended - animal was gone on arrival
 - No capture efforts taken
 - Trap(s) set – capture
 - Trap(s) set - no capture
 - Delivered aversive conditioning/hazing
 - On-site hard release
 - Relocated conflict animal(s)
 - Removed prey animal being fed upon
 - Removed or secured attractants
 - Deployed COS K-9 Unit
 - Immobilized animal(s)
 - Transferred cub(s) of the year to permitted rearing facility

Category 3

Black bears in this category are exhibiting normal, natural behaviour and generally represent a low public safety risk. They may be observed crossing a road, foraging for food, or using natural travel corridors close to communities. In wilderness areas bears may demonstrate some levels of habituation and food conditioning.

Category 3 Response Guidelines

Conservation officers may provide may provide technical advice and/or education. In wilderness areas, officers will manage people to prevent conflict. The following actions are to be used as a guide for conservation officers to determine an appropriate and consistent response to Category 3 black bear family units.

- Investigation
 - Assessed public safety risk
 - Assessed health as per animal welfare guidelines
 - Assessed known conflict history
 - Confirmed identification of offending animal(s)

- Prevention and Education
 - Provided safety information to the public
 - Provided attractant management and husbandry information to the public
 - Conducted media release to educate the community
 - Contacted WildSafeBC or local interest group to deliver education to the public
 - Contacted bylaw to assist with managing attractants

- Outcome
 - Enforcement action (warnings, Dangerous Wildlife Protection Order, charges)
 - Closed area to the public, post signs warning the public
 - Resolved incident with other qualified responders (e.g., Police)
 - Destroyed by others
 - Attended - animal was gone on arrival
 - Delivered aversive conditioning/hazing
 - Removed prey animal being fed upon
 - Removed or secured attractants
 - Transferred cub(s) of the year to permitted rearing facility

HWCR TYPE

Bear Action (HWCR Type):

Sighting: Includes sightings where there was no conflict between humans and bear.

Confined or Treed: Inside structure, no escape route, e.g. up tree/hydro pole/roof or shopping mall parking lot and surrounded by people.

School/Park/Playground Present: Present at a school, park, or playground.

Natural Prey/Crops: Natural prey may include deer, ducks and fish etc. killed or fed upon. Crops planted by man include fruit, nuts, berries, vegetables and all agricultural crops.

Food Conditioned: Learned to associate people with access to non-natural food (or the smell of people), human activities, human-use areas, or food storage receptacles. The black bear uses non-natural food materials such as garbage, pet food, livestock feed, bird feed, composts, barbeque, human food, petroleum products and other odorous products that have attracted a bear not including fruit trees, crops or gardens.

Follow/Stalk/Bluff Charge a Human: Predator behaviours are described as persistent - silent, stalking, following, circling, disappearing and reappearing. Defensive behaviour include bluff charging, huffing, ground swatting, and jaw popping while protecting cubs, food cache, or confined without escape route.

Damage to Property: Includes damage resulting in a financial impact to the property owner. Examples of property that may be damaged include compost bins, building, shed, vehicle, bee hives, fences, trees, and crops. Repeated damage to garbage cans and compost bins may be included after management strategies have failed.

Livestock/Pet Killed/Injured: Cattle, goats, horses, sheep, swine, game farmed animals, animals held under a fur farm licence and animals not defined by the Wildlife Act, that is not native to or does not naturally occur within the province and is tame and kept in captivity for the use of man.

Enters Dwelling - Temporary or Permanent: Enters in or under a house, cabin, trailer, motorhome or a tent and may result in the damage and destruction of property.

Injured/Debilited Present: On site and is so badly injured or debilitated that chance of survival is doubtful, e.g. immobile or restricted movement.

Human Injury/Death: Contact with a person resulting in death or injury (e.g., wound, bruise, puncture, cut, scratch, abrasion, laceration, or other physical trauma). An attack may be predatory, non-defensive (e.g., offensive, aggressive or threatening) or defensive. This also includes feeding on a human.

CONFLICT HISTORY

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Conflict history describes the number of times a family unit has been in conflict with the public. Habituation occurs as the conflict increases. Habituated bears show little or no perceived reaction to people. These are animals whose presence could be interpreted as, or lead to a public safety risk. Habituated bears may frequent developed areas or areas of high human use, or may feed on natural foods within or adjacent to developed sites or in areas frequented by people such as roadsides, campgrounds, or ranch yards.

Low: The initial known conflict by a family unit of bears.

Moderate: Multiple known conflicts by a family unit of bears. This may be determined on the first HWCR as a result of facts that the bears have been in conflict multiple times.

High: Repeated and ongoing conflicts by a family unit of bears. Public safety risk is high.

HWCR LOCATION

HWCR Location

Wilderness: Remote area with few people; may include forest recreation sites, Provincial Park campgrounds and remote cabins.

Rural: May include small communities, regional districts, or small towns.

Urban: May include larger communities, towns or cities.

Generally, subjective language, such as the term “aggressive,” tends to be a characterization rather than an objective description of bear behaviour and should not be used in the application of this guide.

Bear Threat Level		Human-Black Bear (Family Unit) Conflict Response Guidelines											
Category 1		Bear Actions (HWCR Type)						Public Safety Risk					
Category 2		Conflict History	Sighting	Confined or Treed	School/Park/Playground Present	Natural Prey/Crops	Food Condition (includes garbage does not include crops)	Follow/Stalk/Bluff Charge a Human	Damage to Property	Livestock/Pet -Killed/ Injured	Enters Dwelling temporary or permanent	Injured/ Distressed Present (injured animal only)	Human Injury/ Death
Category 3													
HWCR Location	Wilderness	Low											
		Moderate											
		High											
	Rural	Low											
		Moderate											
		High											
	Urban	Low											
		Moderate											
		High											

COS Response to Human-Black Bear Family Unit Conflict Threat Level	
Category 1	- CO must respond due to serious public safety risk or loss of property.
Category 2	- CO to manage people and the site.
Category 3	- CO to monitor and may provide education and advice.