

Bear Coexistence Advisory from Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is receiving reports from across the state of black bears seeking food in yards, outbuildings, and livestock enclosures this spring. Many of these situations can be prevented if people take steps to make their backyards bear-safe before a bear shows up.

Bears—and people—are at risk when bears spend time in human-dominated landscapes. And every time a bear finds an easy meal of birdseed, compost, or unsecured garbage, they are learning a dangerous association between people and food. Coexisting with bears starts with **you** taking the following steps to help keep bears wild:

- **Birdfeeders are a big problem!** Take down birdfeeders until December. You can attract birds by planting bird friendly native plants instead—check out Audubon’s Native Plants for Birds Program: <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>
- **Make your garbage inaccessible.** Store garbage in a secure structure and a bear proof container. Learn how to make your garbage can bear proof here: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/sites/fishandwildlife/files/documents/Learn%20More/Living%20with%20Wildlife/Living%20with%20Bears/bear-resistant-retrofit-polycart.pdf>
- **Dispose of garbage frequently.** If you have pick-up services, wait until the morning to put your garbage out.
- **Demand bear proof dumpsters for your community.**
- **Follow steps for composting in bear country.** Compost needs to be 3 parts brown materials to 1 part kitchen scraps, turned frequently, and kept in a sturdy tumbler or bin: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/node/260>
- **Use electric fencing to keep chickens and bees safe.** Fences need to be 4,000-6,000 volts, tested regularly and baited: <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/node/1996>
- **Clean your grill after every use.**
- **Make bears feel uncomfortable in your yard.** Yell, bang pots and pans, or use other noise devices from inside your home. Never shoot a bear to scare it. Even BBs can seriously injure bears.
- **Please report your bear encounters to Vermont Fish & Wildlife.** These reports allow us to help you prevent future bear incidents. They also give us information to help all Vermonters better coexist with bears: <https://anrweb.vt.gov/FWD/FW/WildlifeBearReport.aspx>

Following these steps can save bears' lives, and help protect you, your neighbors, and your property. Please do your part to be a good neighbor and help keep Vermont's bears wild! If you have questions, contact the Vermont Fish and Wildlife department at 802-828-1000, or fwinformation@vermont.gov.