

BEAR SAFETY WHILE HUNTING

Hunters in bear country have a special responsibility to avoid unnecessary mortality of bears.

Although hunters carry weapons that can protect them from aggressive bears, those weapons can end a bear's life.

Such an unlicensed kill is a serious loss, particularly if a female grizzly is involved.

Grizzly populations require careful management and are very sensitive to female mortality.

There is little room for unplanned mortality if grizzly populations are to flourish.

Each year hunters—hunting other species of game—kill bears in self-defense.

Many of these incidents can be avoided and the lives of both the hunter and the bear can be protected if a few precautions are taken.

While Hunting

Unlike typical hikers who are happy to announce their presence to nearby bears by being noisy, hunters walk quietly and use stealth to get close to game animals.

This practice can place them dangerously close to bears.

With this in mind, hunters should do the following:

- Be aware of your surroundings and proceed cautiously, using all your senses.
- Watch for fresh bear signs, such as tracks, droppings, diggings—and food sources, such as carcasses and berry patches.
- Hunt with a buddy when possible since bears are less likely to attack people in groups.
- If you see a bear, avoid that area. Don't risk a confrontation that could lead to the unintentional injury or death of the bear.
- Remember that a startled or wounded bear can be a very dangerous animal, even to a hunter with a gun.
- When calling game, be aware that bears may also be attracted. Stay alert to sights and sounds, and be able to easily vacate your calling station should the need arise.
- Be especially careful to avoid areas with several noisy crows, ravens, magpies or jays. These birds often indicate the presence of a carcass that may also have attracted a bear.
- Carry bear ("pepper") spray for self defense in case of bear attack. It may offer more effective protection than a gun because a charging bear that is shot usually lives long enough to inflict serious damage!
- Make sure the spray is on your person and within easy reach. Read the instructions, understand how to use the

spray, and test it to be sure of its range and accuracy.

Game Down

- If a hunter shoots a game animal (such as a moose, elk or deer), care must be taken when field-dressing the carcass for transport out of the bush.
- The scent of a freshly killed animal can spread widely on the wind and attract scavengers, including grizzly or black bears.

Hunters should take the following precautions:

- While field-dressing the game carcass, be aware of what may be coming to investigate.
- Make noise! Talk, laugh, whistle or sing so bears know you are there.
- Get the carcass out of the bush as quickly as possible, preferably with help from your buddies.
- If an animal is shot late in the day and you must leave it in the bush overnight:
 - Hang the carcass at least 3.5 metres off the ground, and 1.5 metres from nearby trees or other vertical access, in an area that can be easily seen from a distance.
 - Urinate on the ground at various sites around the carcass. This alerts a

bear that you have laid claim to the carcass. Depending on the bear, its interest may wane when you return.

- When returning to the carcass, use caution. If possible, approach the site from upwind, making as much noise as possible.
- If you see a black bear with the carcass, it may be possible to frighten the bear away by your noise and the size of the group. Do so cautiously.
- If you see a grizzly bear with the carcass, do not press the issue excessively. If it quickly leaves the carcass as you approach, you may be able to reclaim the carcass, but do not antagonize or challenge the bear to threaten or charge you.
- As far as the grizzly is concerned, you have abandoned the carcass and it is now the owner.
- Remember: you have an ethical responsibility to ensure the life of the bear, as well as the safety of your hunting party. Possession of the game carcass is secondary to those concerns.
- Ensure the gut pile is left at least 100 metres from any human access trail.

Hunting Camps

Many hunters camp in remote locations that are home to and frequented by bears.

These back-country camps may be especially attractive to bears because of food stores, cooking odors, hanging game carcasses, horses and horse feed.

It is essential to minimize these attractions and indeed discourage bears from entering the camp.

Outfitters establishing long-term camps that involve horses and hanging meat should consider such devices as electric fencing to protect their camps.

Bear Safety while Camping

Bears are attracted to the smell of food. Do not invite bears to your campsite through carelessness.

Observe the following precautions for your safety:

- Always store food out of reach of bears, preferably in airtight containers in the trunk of your vehicle, and away from sleeping areas. Never store food in a tent or tent-trailer where you are sleeping.
- Never cook or eat in or near your tent. Do not bury food scraps.
- Do not litter. Place all garbage in suitable containers provided in campgrounds or take it with you if no containers are available.
- Clean fish at designated cleaning stations. If no station is available, dispose of fish remains in proper garbage containers.
- At night, move about the campsite

cautiously. Always use a flashlight.

- If camping with a dog, keep it on a leash or in your vehicle. An unleashed dog may irritate a bear and bring it back to camp.
- Keep young children close to you.
- Bears are attracted to berry patches; avoid them, if possible.
- Keep a can of bear ("pepper") spray handy and in your tent at night.
- Be sure that all bear attractants like food supplies for people, pets or other animals, or scented toiletries are stored so they are not available to bears at night or when unattended.
- If appropriate storage facilities are not available, attractants should be hung at least 3.5 metres above ground, 1.5 metres from nearby trees or other vertical access features, and at least 100 metres from any tents or sleeping areas.