

Alberni Valley Bear Smart Committee Checklist for Safety in Bear Country

It's nearly fall and bears are definitely looking for food! They need to bulk-up big time prior to winter denning. Since we create the conditions that attract bears to where we live, **it is our responsibility** to do all we can to prevent them from becoming a problem. A bear's sense of smell is probably 100 times better than a dog's, so we have to make sure we aren't attracting them to our homes, businesses, and schools.

If you encounter a bear, **DO NOT SCREAM OR RUN**. Keep calm! Speak in a firm voice, raise your arms to look larger, back away slowly to a safe place. At your home, pick up small children or pets and go indoors. Let your neighbours know to do the same. Once safely inside, bang pots and pans, or generally make noise to let the bear know it is not welcome in your yard.

Here are some things you can do to stay safe and help prevent bear-people conflicts in your neighbourhood. **NEVER feed bears. Not only is it illegal, it could cause a problem for someone else, and sooner or later, it can result in the destruction of that bear.**

a. Doors and Windows

- During bear season (NOW!), keep accessible doors and windows closed and locked to prevent bears from getting into your house, especially at night.

b. Plants attractants

- Cut back blackberries and other bear foods around homes, play areas, near dumpsters and garbage cans.
- Pick up all fallen fruit. If you don't use the fruit, consider asking a community group to take it for the food bank, or remove the trees and replace with species that don't attract bears (no nut trees, either).
- Remove bear foods from ornamental gardens and landscaping, and along trails near residences.

c. Garbage attractants

- Only use dumpsters with sturdy metal lids. Keep them locked & emptied frequently.
- Keep garbage cans indoors or in secure closed garages or sheds. Preferably, use bear-resistant garbage cans. NEVER put your garbage can out before the morning of pickup.
- Remove garbage cans from play areas.

d. Location/visibility of playsets and play areas (Parks and Schools)

- Trim back vegetation along and overhanging fences for visibility. Schools and playgrounds adjacent to dense cover and fish-bearing streams should erect a high fence on that side of the property.
- Move playsets to open, visible areas, and remove plants that block visibility from windows.
- Always make sure play times are supervised if bears are known to be in the area.
- Don't locate dumpsters or garbage cans on or next to play areas.

e. Other attractants and activities

- Birdfeeders:** Do not use birdfeeders (including seeds, suet, and hummingbird nectar) during bear season (summer/fall). Birds have access to plenty of natural foods during this time.
- Barbecues:** Burn your barbecues clean. Wash and store them covered out of the wind, preferably indoors (without the propane tank).
- Pet food:** Feed your pets and store their dishes and food inside.
- Livestock and feed:** Consider electric fencing to protect small livestock paddocks and chicken coops and runs. Store all feed in bear-resistant containers and in a secure building or shed. Portable, solar-powered electric fencing is available. Contact us for more info.
- Outdoor freezers, fish nets and smokers, coolers, and plastic garbage bags** with things other than garbage in them are all attractants to bears. Bears are smart and learn fast. If they see something that has given them a food reward in the past, they'll look for another food reward, even if your freezer, cooler, or a garbage bag doesn't contain anything they can eat. Try to keep these enclosed in a sturdy shed or bear-proof enclosure.
- Actively encourage your neighbours to be Bear Aware.**

For more info, contact Maggie Paquet in Alberni (250-723-8802, maggiempaquet5@shaw.ca), or Crystal McMillan in Tofino/Ucluelet (250-266-2327, bearawareucluelet@telus.net). Please report problems to the Conservation Officer Service: 1-877-952-7277 (RAPP). Reporting is important to help us target our education efforts and to help neighbourhoods avoid problems. <http://www.acrd.bc.ca/cms.asp?wpID=231>