

BEARSMART

Bees and Bears



our challenge Bears exist throughout most of Alberta. Black bears are found across the province, with the exception of some agricultural lands in the south east corner of the province and grizzly bears are found primarily along the Rocky Mountains and in the Foothills of western Alberta. In recent years some areas of the province, particularly parts of southern Alberta, have been experiencing grizzly bear activity in areas further east of traditional home ranges.

A large portion of Alberta's bear populations overlap areas where people live, work and play. This has resulted in increasing human bear interactions on both public and private lands. Some interactions involve bears accessing unnatural food sources including garbage, fruit trees, livestock, livestock feed and, in some cases, bee yards.

Aside from the obvious loss of bees and honey, issues of public safety and property damage, are also a concern when bears access bee yards. Attempts are often made to capture and remove bears that begin to associate developed areas as a food source. If attractants are left unsecured, there is a risk that other bears will eventually discover the area and the same issue will arise.

Securing attractants results in reduced incidents of property damage and public safety concerns and the need to translocate bears; a win for all concerned.



Photo Credit: Liz Goldie

Bear and bee yard conflict

In recent years, the number of bee operations has increased, often into known bear habitat. As a result, interactions between bears and bee keepers are also increasing. There are a number of proactive measures that are recommended to protect bee yards and bee keepers from bears and other animals.

Open bee yard sight lines – Ensure open sightlines are in place so that bears and people are alerted to each other's presence. This will help to reduce the chance of surprise encounters.

Carry and know how to use bear spray – It is recommended that people working and living in bear country carry bear spray and to know how to use it properly. Bear spray is an effective tool to deter bears and other wildlife and is easy to use.

Install electric fencing – Properly designed and installed electric fence has proven to be very effective at deterring bears from accessing food attractants including bee yards. Once bears learn they cannot access food from a particular area, they typically move on.

Resources available for bee keepers – Current programs within Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) can help bee keepers reduce chances of negative encounters with bears. On a case-by-case basis, AEP will loan electric fence kits to landowners who are experiencing bear problems. Call your local AEP office to determine if this program exists in your area. For additional information on how to prevent interactions with bears or other wildlife, please visit Alberta BearSmart at www.bearsmart.alberta.ca. For any conflicts with bears call Report-A-Poacher at 1-800-642-3800.



Protected beehives with electric fencing



Did you know that if you own a livestock animal or poultry, and that animal is kept at premises other than a commingling site (e.g. stable), you need to apply for a Premise Identification Account and obtain at least one PID Number associated to where the animal(s) are located. For more information on the PID program please contact 310-FARM (3276) or go to www.agric.gov.ab.ca.

Current data indicates there are over 300,000 bee colonies in Alberta, representing 43 per cent of the bee colonies in Canada.

