

# BearWise® tips for spring, as bears become more active.

Spring has arrived and wildlife is becoming more active, including our state's black bears. With this increase in activity, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is sharing ways to be [BearWise®](#) to help prevent conflicts between people and bears.

Black bears are on the move more this time of year in search of things to eat, including female bears that are teaching their cubs where to look for food. To prevent bears and other wildlife from associating your yard with an easy meal, remove potential food sources and attractants – such as unsecured garbage, pet food and bird seed – from around your property. Florida black bears typically try to avoid people but may linger in neighborhoods if they can easily access food sources. Bears will move on if they can't find food.

Help avoid negative interactions with bears by following these tips and [BearWise® Basics](#) this spring:

## 1: Never feed or approach bears

- Always give bears and other wildlife space — getting too close to a wild animal can be dangerous.
- It is illegal in Florida to intentionally feed bears or leave out food or garbage that will attract bears and cause conflicts.
- Feeding bears can make them associate people with food and lose their natural fear of humans.

## 2: Secure potential bear food sources

- Store garbage in a sturdy shed or garage and then put it out on the morning of pickup rather than the night before.
- If not stored in a secured building, [modify your existing garbage can](#) to make it more bear-resistant or use a [bear-resistant container](#).
- Secure commercial garbage in [bear-resistant dumpsters](#).
- Protect gardens, beehives, compost and livestock with [electric fencing](#).
- Pick ripe fruit and nuts from trees and bushes, and remove fallen fruit and nuts from the ground.

## 3: Remove or secure bird and wildlife feeders

- Remove bird and other wildlife feeders when bears are more active in the spring and fall.
- If feeders are left up, only put enough food out for birds and other wildlife to finish eating before dark and make feeders [bear-resistant](#).

## 4: Don't leave pet food outside

- Feed pets indoors.
- If feeding pets outside, only put food out for short time periods and bring in leftover food and dishes after each feeding.

## **5: Clean and store grills**

- Clean and degrease grills and smokers after each use.
- If moveable, keep them stored in a secure shed or garage.

## **6: Alert neighbors to bear activity**

- If you see a bear, share sightings with your neighbors.
- Share these BearWise® tips on how to avoid conflicts with bears.
- Encourage your homeowner's association or local government to institute [bylaws or ordinances](#) to require trash be kept secure.

Black bears are generally not aggressive but they have injured people in Florida. Dogs in particular can trigger defensive behaviors from bears, especially females with cubs. When [walking dogs](#), keep them close to you on a short leash and stay aware of your surroundings. Before letting your dog outside in your yard, flip exterior lights on and off and bang on the door to give bears and other wildlife a chance to leave the area.

Bears cross more roadways as they become more active this time of year. To avoid vehicle collisions with bears and other wildlife, [slow down when driving](#), particularly on rural highways at dawn or dusk. Look for road signs identifying bear and other wildlife crossing areas. Each year in Florida, an average of 250 bears are killed after being hit by vehicles.

Having conflicts with bears? FWC should be your first call - our staff are here to help. Please call one of the FWC's five regional offices to speak with a biologist about the specifics of your situation to help resolve any conflicts. Go to [MyFWC.com/Contact](#) and click on "Contact [Regional Offices](#)" to find the phone number for your region. If you want to report someone who is either harming bears or intentionally feeding them, call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).

More information is available at [MyFWC.com/Bear](#), where you can access the "[Guide to Living in Bear Country](#)" brochure. Find additional ways to be BearWise at [BearWise.org](#). Thirty-eight states, including Florida, support BearWise®, an innovative program that helps people learn ways to responsibly live around bears. Help us help bears and other wildlife by purchasing the Conserve Wildlife license plate at [WildlifeFlorida.org/CWT](#).

Spring is an active time for many of Florida's wildlife species. For more information on wildlife in Spring, visit [MyFWC.com/News](#) and click on "[Spring Wildlife News](#)."