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Bureau of Wildlife**

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## Preventing Bear Problems at Homes

Black bears are common in much of New York. Problems with black bears at homes are usually created by people leaving food items in places that are accessible to bears. Once a bear finds food near a home, it will almost always return, and while in the area it will seek out anything it thinks may be edible, from bird feed and garbage to barbecue grills and compost piles.

When bears start to associate humans with food their normal tendency to avoid humans begins to change. They begin to approach dwellings where they are more prone to encounters with humans. They often cause considerable property damage in their search for human foods, such as broken windows or doors on home or outbuildings. They are also more likely to be struck by vehicles as they cross roadways near houses, campgrounds and restaurants.

If you live in a neighborhood, bears that are attracted to one home may cause problems in the whole area. Involve and engage all the people in your neighborhood by providing them with information on steps they need to take to reduce bear problems.

You can avoid attracting bears to your home by using the following simple tips. Encourage your neighbors to do the same.

### Household Garbage

One of the most common bear-related problems is that of a bear getting into garbage at a family residence. Proper handling of household garbage can prevent and solve problems with bears.

1. Store garbage containers inside the home, garage, or outbuilding away from windows and doors. Bears can smell and see containers stored close to windows or doors and may attempt to break in to get them. Do not store garbage on a porch.
2. Garbage containers should be clean inside and out and should close tightly and securely to minimize odors.
  - Buy new washable and sealable containers or completely clean and deodorize old ones with household ammonia. Empty a box of moth balls into the bottom of the container at least once a year.
  - Double line containers with disposable plastic bags. Sprinkle or spray a small amount of ammonia on the garbage surface after each addition and close the bags tightly.
  - Keep the container closed tightly by mechanical latch, rope, or chain tie down, or purchase an animal-resistant container.
3. Take garbage to the transfer station (dump) as often as possible to decrease amounts at the residence, which decreases attractive odors. Store especially smelly items like fish and meat scraps in the freezer until the day you go to the transfer station.

4. If you use a garbage pickup service, do not put garbage cans out at the roadside until the morning of pick-up.
5. Do not burn garbage - the odor may attract bears.

### **Bird Feeders**

All types of bird feed, from seed to suet, are attractive to bears. Bears will destroy bird feeders to get the seeds, and may break into buildings to get stored bird seed.

1. Feed birds only from December 1 through April 1, when bears are not active.
2. Store bird seed in tightly closed containers inside secure buildings such as a shed, garage, or basement. Do not store bird seed on a porch.
3. In the spring take down and store all feeders. Clean up all bird seed that has been scattered on the ground under feeders and spray the ground with some ammonia to kill odors.



### **Other Measures**

- Never intentionally feed bears!
- Do not feed pets outdoors or on porches. Store all pet food in tightly closed containers inside a secure building such as a shed, garage, or basement. Do not store pet food on a porch.
- If you compost, do not put meat, fish, or fruit scraps in the composter. These materials can attract bears.
- Clean barbeque grills thoroughly after each use and run the grill on high heat for a few minutes after cooking to burn off food odors. Remove grease cans and store them inside, preferably in a freezer or refrigerator to prevent odors that can attract bears.

### **Remember:**

**– Remove the attraction and you will remove the bear.**

