



# Be BearSmart!



From mid-July through August bears can be found using different habitats in search of food. This includes digging for roots in shrubby or alpine habitats, eating insects in forests and bogs, and looking for berries in mixed and open forest habitats (Munro et al., 2006). Bears are therefore moving around a lot, and can be so preoccupied with finding food they don't immediately notice people or can come into work sites, farms, communities and homes—particularly if possible food sources are improperly stored or garbage is left out.

Therefore, it is important to **Be BearSmart**—clean up and store food attractants properly so you don't contribute to bear problems. It is also important to stay safe in bear country, especially since people are out enjoying summer, berry picking, camping, hiking, biking, and more. **Carrying bear spray**, accessible on your person, is a great way to help keep you safe in bear country!

**What is bear spray?** Bear spray normally contains three items: varying concentrations of capsaicin—the active chemical found in chili peppers— an oil base. and propellant. A typical 225 gram can has 5-6 one second bursts, with a shelf life of up to 3 years.

**How does it work?** The effective range of bear spray is typically **3—5 meters**. When the cloud of spray come into contact with the bear it causes irritation to the eyes, nose and mouth. The sound and sight of the spray coming out of the can may also help deter the bear. The immediate effect of spray is to deter the bear, whether it is approaching you or standing there.



## Tips for Avoiding Bear Encounters at Home, Work and Recreating:

- Keep your BBQ clean—bears will smell food residues left behind and come investigate!
- Securely store pet food indoors or in bear-proof containers. Same goes for garbage, recycling, or dead livestock!
- Clean up fruiting trees and shrubs, and don't put out bird seed.
- Have a safety plan for kids playing outdoors—they should know what to do if they see a bear! Practice a “bear safety drills.”
- Keep your dog on leash—dogs can trigger unwanted and negative encounters with bears.
- Remember: bears are curious, intelligent animals—once they learn about a new food source, even if left unintentionally, they will return to it. Keep a clean camp/work/yard site to help keep bears in the forest!



## DID YOU KNOW?

Simple changes in your behaviour can reduce human-bear encounters and prevent potentially dangerous situations.

See our Bear Spray video on the Environment and Parks YouTube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TgE9o4xX1WI>

Most bear encounters can be prevented. It's up to us to decide how we will keep ourselves safe, and keep wild bears from becoming habituated, problem bears. For more information visit:

<http://aep.alberta.ca/recreation-public-use/alberta-bear-smart/default.aspx>