

# Keeping Black Bear Out of Beehives



Maine is home to the largest population of black bears in the eastern United States. Our bears are most active between April 1 and November 1. When natural foods are scarce, especially in the spring and summer, bears will venture into backyards in search of easily accessible food such as bird feeders, garbage, grills, beehives, pet food, and livestock.

Many and most bear conflicts can be prevented by removing or securing common bear attractants. Remember a bear is taking a risk when it ventures close to people. If you remove the reward, they will not take the risk.

## Here are some ways to keep bears out of your bees:

- Place beehives more than 300 feet from the forest and wood line. Trees may provide cover for bears and make them more likely to approach a beehive. In fact, a study found that bee yards located less than 300 feet from forest edges and riparian zones received twice as many visits from bears than those that were more than 300 feet away.
- Harvest honey as soon as possible after the spring, summer, and fall nectar flows. This will limit the appeal to foraging bears.
- If a bear is in the area:
  - Electric fence can be an effective deterrent if properly installed and maintained.
    - Keep all hives consolidated for easy fencing and management.
    - A minimum of 5,000 volts passing through each hot wire is needed to deter a bear. Check each stand with a voltage meter.
    - Place bait (honey wrapped in foil) on each strand of fence to ensure bear gets a shock before breaching the fence.
    - If using a fence that requires a grounding rod, the grounding rod should be  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ " galvanized steel rod driven to a depth of 6ft (rust of non-galvanized steel are not effective grounds).
    - Vegetation should be kept down around the fence.
    - Voltage and ground rod should be checked periodically to ensure fence is working. Note: poor voltage is often related to a poor ground
  - If you can't install fence, consider relocating the beehives

For more information on keeping bears out of your beehives, visit [bearwise.org](http://bearwise.org) to learn more about bear-resistant barriers or review [MDIFW's fencing guide](http://mdifw.com/livingwithblackbears) available at [mefishwildlife.com/livingwithblackbears](http://mefishwildlife.com/livingwithblackbears)

If you see evidence of bear activity in your backyard or neighborhood, visit [mefishwildlife.com/livingwithwildlife](http://mefishwildlife.com/livingwithwildlife) to learn what you can do to prevent and solve conflicts!

## For additional information or assistance, please contact your regional wildlife biologist:

Region A – Gray: (207) 657-2345

Region B – Sidney: (207) 287-5300, Press 1

Region C – Jonesboro: (207) 255-2080

Region D – Strong: (207) 778-3322

Region E – Greenville: (207) 695-3756, Press 1

Region F – Enfield: (207) 794-1003

Region G – Ashland: (207) 435-3231, Press 1