

NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection  
Division of Fish and Wildlife

Know the Bear Facts - Black Bears in New Jersey

## Bear Facts for Agriculturists

Black bears have diverse food habits, which are reflected in the different types of damage that they cause, ranging from sweet corn damage to beehive destruction.

Livestock including chickens, rabbits, sheep and goats are also subject to depredation by black bears.

Farmers living in areas of the state frequented by black bears can follow these important tips to deter black bears if they are experiencing crop or livestock depredation.

- Livestock feed should not be left out overnight. Store feed in a secure area.
- Livestock pens should be located at least 50 yards from forest tree lines or other sources of cover for bears.
- Black bears are attracted to honey and will also consume bee larvae from beehives. Beehives should be located at least 50 yards from forest tree lines or other sources of cover for bears.
- Consider installing electric fencing to protect crops, beehives and livestock.
- Electric fencing is the most effective and efficient method of preventing bear damage to beehives, crops and livestock.
- Electric fencing should be simple and as strong as possible. Use a minimum voltage output of 3,000 volts and bait the fence with something like bacon strips. Fencing is only effective if it is maintained.
- Detailed fencing and maintenance instructions are available on the next page.
- The Wildlife Control Unit is also available to provide on-site assistance with fence construction techniques to those interested in installing electric fencing to prevent bear damage to beehives, agriculture crops and livestock.
- Depredation permits are available to eligible farmers who are experiencing crop and livestock depredation by black bears. For more information, contact the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Control Unit can be reached at (908) 735-8793.



Example of Crop Damage



Protect Beehives with Electric Fencing

# Electric Fencing

## Construction

Fence construction should be simple and as strong as possible. The following method of fencing is easy to erect and effective in most cases.

- Drive the corner posts. Remove grass and weeds in an 18" strip along the fence line.
- Spray the cleared area with a herbicide to prevent the return of vegetation. Do not spray wider than 18" because the bear will be better grounded if it is standing on grass.
- Use four strands of polywire, barbed wire or electronet at 4", 16", 26" and 36" above the ground. Stretch the wires to eliminate sagging. Use stones or weights to keep the wires at the correct heights when going over low areas.
- Leave extra wire at the knot so it can be wrapped around the lower wire to complete the circuit.
- Use a minimum voltage output of 3,000 volts. Verify this with a voltmeter. Energizers should be compatible with the type of wire used. Check the manufacturer's recommendations to be sure that all the requirements are met.
- Locate the fence posts 12 feet to 15 feet along the fence line. Install the insulators and wire.
- Energize all wires in the fence system. The battery should be located inside the enclosure.
- Drive the ground rod 5 feet to 7 feet into moist soil.

## Baiting the Fence

- Bait the wires on the electric fence in order to direct a mild shock onto the muzzle area of a black bear. This makes the fence much more effective, regardless of the size of the bear.
- Bait the wires with either bacon wrapped around the wire on all sides or tin foil and peanut butter. When a bear grabs the bait it will get a shock to its tongue and mouth.

## Maintenance

Fencing is only effective if it is maintained. Every time you visit the site check the following:

- Make sure the wires are tight.
- Change the batteries as needed.
- Drop loops in wires are beneficial.
- Use at least a 70-amp hour battery.
- Consult your supplier for the correct high output fence charger.
- Check voltage with a voltmeter.
- Marine battery terminals and lead composition eyelets resist corrosion.
- Keep wires baited at all times.
- Remove vegetation that may be touching the wires.