

Title:	Grizzly Bear Response Guide
Number:	AEP, Fish and Wildlife, 2016, no. 1
Program Name:	Fish and Wildlife Policy
Effective Date:	April 1, 2016
This document was updated on:	April 1, 2016
ISBN No.	ISBN 978-1-4601-2713-1 (print) ISBN 978-1-4601-2714-8 (PDF)
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Grizzly Bear Response Guide

INTRODUCTION

An effective wildlife management strategy must balance the needs of wildlife with those of the public. Protection of life and property is a priority, as is meeting objectives for grizzly bear population management.

This guide provides a standard approach in deciding grizzly bear management responses. It is a resource for government staff who must act in situations of conflict where clear, concise and consistent direction is needed. The guide supports the province's Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan and is the result of collaboration among biologists, enforcement officers, and problem wildlife specialists. Except in national parks, this guide will apply to specific events involving grizzly bears throughout the province, including lands within provincial parks and protected areas. The guide is reviewed annually and revised as required.

The guide also shows Albertans how human/grizzly bear incidents will be handled. Staff will use the guide as a reference to communicate with stakeholders and the public about managing problem grizzly bears and to promote public and community support for grizzly bear conservation.

PREVENTATIVE ACTION

Preventative action is the first response in most situations where a grizzly bear has not presented an immediate threat to humans.

Preventative actions include:

- Assess situation/monitor;
- Close area to public access;
- Educate by providing information on bear behaviour and presence;
- Remove or order removal of attractants;
- Allow access by groups only;
- Erect electric fences around camps and/or attractants;
- Limit access through timing restrictions;
- Allow hard-sided accommodation only (no tents or tent trailers);
- Use hazing or aversive conditioning on site by trained personnel; and
- Hard release (release soon after capture and usually at the capture site, with harassment applied).

Often, preventative actions may be sufficient to prevent future incidents. For example, if a grizzly bear is defending a prey carcass, then closing the area to public access until the bear consumes or abandons the carcass will effectively prevent potentially dangerous encounters. Preventative action also may extend to a grizzly bear that presented an unprovoked threat to a person. For example, in a surprise encounter, if the grizzly makes contact with a human but does not continue the attack and leaves the area, closing the area may be the appropriate response.

USING THE GUIDE

If preventative actions have proven insufficient and control actions are deemed necessary, this guide will be used to determine the appropriate response. The guide relies on the results of an incident investigation along with assessing the grizzly bear age/sex classification, behaviour and known conflict history, to enable staff to determine appropriate response options to a conflict situation. Grizzlies have somewhat predictable behavioural patterns that, when combined with location, time, and other factors, may indicate the probability of a future incident.

INVESTIGATION

Reports of human/grizzly bear conflict or property damage will be investigated by trained government staff. The aim of the investigation is to collect evidence, including witness reports and physical evidence that will provide an accurate account of the grizzly bear's actions, as well as any human activity involved.

CLASSIFICATION

Four main factors are used to help determine an appropriate response to human/bear conflict or property damage. They include the age, sex and family status of the animal (sow with cub, orphan, etc.), the animal's behaviour, location of the incident relative to recovery objectives, and its known conflict history. For example, a grizzly that has been involved in conflict in the past will be classified differently than one that has no history. Likewise a bear that is involved in conflict far from grizzly bear recovery habitat will evoke a different response than if it is within recovery habitat.

An experienced Fish and Wildlife Officer or, in Provincial Parks, a Conservation Officer or Ecologist, in consultation with the appropriate Regional Biologists will make these determinations based on evidence collected during an investigation, and may call upon other technical experts to assist with the evaluation. The subsequent response will be based on these factors as outlined in the guide.

The following age-based descriptions are used to classify the type of grizzly bear involved in an incident:

- Cub: < 12 months
- Orphan Cub: < 12 months not accompanied by adult
- Young: A cub, yearling or sub-adult that is accompanying the mother
- Sub-adult: 12-48 months
- Adult: > 48 months
- Old adult: Displays advanced age (tooth wear and deteriorated physical state)

A bear is further classified based on its behaviour:

- **Habituated:** A habituated grizzly bear shows little or no perceived reaction to people. This is an animal whose presence could be interpreted as, or lead to a public safety risk. A habituated bear may frequent developed areas or areas of high human use, or may feed on natural foods within or adjacent to developed sites or in areas frequented by people such as roadsides, campgrounds, or ranch yards. Preventative actions should be used on a grizzly bear classified as habituated, however in some cases, the situation may require no action while in others, where resources allow, a habituated bear may be captured, marked, and monitored.
- **Food-conditioned:** A grizzly bear that has learned to associate people (or the smell of people), human activities, human-use areas, or food storage receptacles, including for agriculture, with anthropogenic food (Herrero et al. 2005). The grizzly bear uses unnatural food materials (such as garbage, pet food, compost, bird feed, or livestock food) that have been reasonably secured from grizzly bears. It feeds on agricultural crops or other anthropogenic food sources in close proximity to humans or is deemed an imminent public safety risk.
- **Depredation:** A depredation grizzly bear has attacked, killed, or is an immediate threat to a pet or livestock animal.
- **Offender:** An offender grizzly bear is one that presents an apparent threat to human safety or has had contact with, injured or killed a human after being provoked (i.e. the

grizzly bear's actions were the result of, or response to, actions by the human). An offender bear may not always require capture. If the bear's response was defensive in nature and the contact was not prolonged, the location of the incident will be a major component in the decision.

- **Predator:** A predator grizzly bear is one that has killed a human and either fed upon, or concealed the body, or has stalked, pursued, chased or ambushed a human (unprovoked) resulting in grizzly bear-human contact, whether or not the victim was killed or injured. If the grizzly bear's young participated in the attack or fed upon the victim, then all members of the family group will be classified as Predator.

An animal's history is also used to determine an appropriate response, taking into account the number of times the behaviour of a particular grizzly has been rated against this guide. This history will be informed by strong evidence that the conflict history is associated with the individual in question. For example, DNA and marked bears provide the strongest level of evidence towards the history. Depending on the severity of an offence, multiple occurrences related to the same bear in a short period of time, during which no capture occurs, will be interpreted as a single offence. In some instances, a grizzly bear will be captured, radio marked, and monitored as part of a research or an aversive conditioning program. Such a capture event will not be counted as part of the bear's conflict history.

RESPONSE

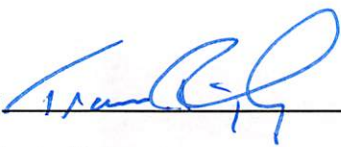
If a bear needs to be captured by culvert trap, snare, or immobilization it will be done so in accordance with the established departmental standards and procedures. The following chart identifies the types of responses based on the age, behaviour, and incident history of the bear.

If euthanasia is identified as the appropriate response, a thorough review of the incident and the investigation results will be conducted by the Provincial Carnivore Specialist, the Provincial Problem Wildlife Specialist, the relevant Regional Problem Wildlife Specialist, Human Wildlife Conflict Specialist, Regional Biologists, and any other relevant staff, to ensure the grizzly bear is appropriately classified before the animal is destroyed. When euthanasia is determined to be the appropriate response, the action will follow the Canada Council on Animal Care Guidelines.

GRIZZLY BEAR RESPONSE CHART

PREVENTATIVE ACTION WILL BE THE INITIAL RESPONSE BEFORE THE DECISION IS MADE TO CAPTURE (see above)
THE RESPONSE CHART RELATES TO BEARS CAPTURED AS THE RESULT OF A CONFLICT INCIDENT

BEHAVIOUR RANK	HABITUATED/FOOD CONDITIONED			DEPREDATION			OFFENDER/PREDATOR
HISTORY RANK	1	2	3	1	2	3	1
BEAR TYPE							
Sub-adult (F)	RL / RM	RM	EU	RL / RM	RM/EU	EU	EU
Adult (F)	RL / RM	RM	EU	RL / RM	RM/EU	EU	EU
Adult (with young)	RL / RM	RM	EU	RL / RM	RM/EU	EU	EU
Old adult (with young)	RL / RM	RM	EU	RL / RM	RM/EU	EU	EU
Sub-adult(M)	RL/RM/EU	RM/EU	EU	RM / EU	EU		EU
Adult (M)	RL/RM/EU	RM/EU	EU	RM / EU	EU		EU
Old adult (F)	RL/RM/EU	RM/EU	EU	RM / EU	EU		EU
Old adult (M)	RL/RM/EU	RM/EU	EU	EU			EU
Orphan Cub	RL/CP/EU	CP/EU		RL/CP/EU	CP/EU		EU
RESPONSE TYPE RL- Relocation within Bear Management Area RM- Relocation outside Bear Management Area CP- Retain in captivity in suitable location EU- Euthanasia							

Original signed by: 

Date: Apr 1/16

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