

**Avon Police  
Department**

# Memo

**To:** Chief Rinaldo  
**From:** Sgt. Gannon *Sgt. Gannon*  
**Date:** April 23, 2019  
**Re:** APD Bear Protocols



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## **Avon Police Department Response to Bear Calls:**

The Avon Police Department currently dispatches an officer to all reported black bear sightings as manpower and call volume allows. That officer will respond to the area of the sighting and, if the bear is seen, will utilize their air horn to attempt to scare the bear off. In some cases, an officer will deploy less-lethal bean bag rounds which cause the bear discomfort and have proven effective in causing the bear to immediately leave the area. Examples of when utilization of bean bag rounds would be appropriate include a bear being found in a homeowner's garage, or a bear sighted near a highly populated or heavily traveled area, e.g., Route 44 or Rails to Trails. It should be noted that in most calls officers respond to, the bear is simply making its way through yards or wood lines. In these instances, it would not be appropriate for an officer to deploy bean bag rounds as the bear is not creating a nuisance or a hazard. Bears are wildlife that inhabit the state and seeing them is not an unusual occurrence. Typically, if left alone bears will return to their natural wooded habitat.

## **CT DEEP Policies for Response, Relocation, and Euthanasia:**

The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) has created four categories to guide their response to black bear complaints. The vast majority of bear calls we receive in Avon fall under "Category I". These criteria include bears causing no property damage or minor damage, e.g., bird feeders or garbage cans. In these cases, the DEEP does not respond but will refer callers to the DEEP internet site for additional information.

The DEEP will respond when a bear rises to the level of "Category II". These criteria include repetitive occurrences of bears causing property damage when food attractants (bird feeders, garbage cans) are not present, bears causing substantial property damage, and bears killing or maiming pets not under the control of their handler. Category II bears will only be relocated if they do not have suitable habitat in the vicinity. Generally speaking, Avon provides black bears with suitable habitat.

"Category III" criteria include bears reported to be causing repetitive substantial property damage, or bears killing or maiming pets under the control of their handler. Category III bears will be subjected to On-Site Aversion Conditioning or possibly euthanasia following approval of

the Bureau of Natural Resources (BNR) Chief, Wildlife Division Director, or Bear Program Biologist. Category III bears will only be relocated if they do not have suitable habitat in the vicinity. Generally speaking, Avon provides black bears with suitable habitat.

"Category IV" criteria include bears exhibiting aggression toward humans and bears that have entered commonly occupied areas of buildings (not including garages). These bears are subject to euthanasia following approval of the BNR Chief, Wildlife Division Director, or Bear Program Biologist.

I have attached the full DEEP Black Bear Response Guidelines.

**Summary of Bear-Related Calls in Avon 2016-Current:**

I have attached a bar graph showing bear-related complaints the Avon Police Department has received since 1/1/2016. Also attached is a chart and map showing bear complaints by grid. During this time period the APD has received a total of 400 bear complaint calls that generated a case number. It should be noted that often times the APD will receive multiple calls from a neighborhood or area of town reporting the same bear, and that generally only one case number is generated.

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
***Black Bear Response Guidelines***

**SUBJECT:** Department of Energy and Environmental Protection response to public safety and property damage threats posed by black bears.

**PURPOSE:** To establish criteria for determining conditions wherein black bears pose a public safety or property damage threat and to establish response measures. The primary response measures are public education, collaboration with local public safety officials, and direct intervention (i.e., aversion conditioning, relocation, euthanasia).

**POLICY:** It is the policy of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to manage the black bear population to maximize ecological, economic and cultural benefits, while providing for public safety and property protection.

**PROCEDURE:** *Definition of Public Safety and Property Damage Threat* –Black bears, by virtue of their size and behavior have the potential to pose a public safety threat, and threat of property damage. These concerns increase as bears enter areas with higher human population density. To guide Department response to black bear/human conflicts, threats have been categorized by level of concern.

**1. Category I**

- a. Black bears causing no or minor property damage (e.g., to bird feeders, garbage cans) in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants present;
- b. Black bears causing no property damage in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants not present;
- c. Black bears causing minor property damage, first occurrence, in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants not present;
- d. Black bears damaging an unprotected apiary.

**Response to Category I:**

- a. Provide information on preventing conflicts (e.g. remove food attractants), and bear behavior and biology; and
- b. Refer interested citizens to DEEP internet site for additional information.

**2. Category II**

- a. Black bears causing minor property damage, repetitive occurrence, in areas with adjacent escape refugia; food attractants not present;
- b. Black bears in areas without adjacent escape refugia;
- c. Black bears causing substantial property damage, first occurrence;
- d. Black bears causing damage to orchards or agricultural crops; first indication of damage;
- e. Black bears damaging a protected apiary; first occurrence;
- f. Black bears killing or maiming pets not under the control of their handler; or

- g. Black bears killing or maiming livestock not under protective controls<sup>1</sup>.

**Response to Category II:**

- a. On-Site Aversion Conditioning – locations with suitable habitat within the vicinity; or
- b. Relocation and Aversion Conditioning – locations without suitable habitat in the vicinity.  
Bear will be captured, ear-tagged, and transported to a suitable location for release.

**3. Category III**

- a. Black bears otherwise characterized as Category II but not exhibiting an aversion response to aversion conditioning;
- b. Black bears causing substantial property damage, repetitive occurrence;
- c. Black bears causing damage to orchards or agricultural crops; repetitive occurrence;
- d. Black bears entering a protected apiary; repetitive occurrence; or
- e. Black bears killing or maiming pets under the control of their handler.

**Response to Category III: (from among below options based on judgment of EnCon/Wildlife staff on-site)**

- a. Euthanasia: Following approval from the BNR Bureau Chief, Wildlife Division Director, or Bear Program Biologist; or
- b. Repeat of On-Site Aversion Conditioning – locations with suitable habitat within the vicinity; or
- c. Relocation and Aversion Conditioning – locations without suitable habitat in the vicinity.  
Bear will be captured, ear-tagged, and transported to a suitable location for release.

**4. Category IV**

- a. Black bears killing or maiming livestock under protective controls<sup>2</sup>;
- b. Black bears exhibiting aggression toward humans;
- c. Black bears encountered while in, entering, or exiting, or otherwise known (i.e. an identifiable bear) to have entered commonly occupied areas of buildings (e.g., residential dwellings, office and commercial buildings; not to include accessory structures/garages whether attached or detached);
- d. Orphaned cubs less than six months old and less than 60 pounds; or
- e. Black bears displaying neurological, physical or biomechanical symptoms (lameness, inability to stand/walk, circling, excessive panting) associated with injury, disease, or physiological distress likely to result in the prolonged suffering and death of the animal.

**Response to Category IV: Euthanasia - Decision made by EnCon/Wildlife staff on-site.**

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<sup>1</sup> 'Livestock under protective control' means cattle, horses, poultry, and similar animals kept for domestic use but not as pets, especially on a farm or ranch and restrained within a physical barrier (e.g., fenced pasture, paddock, corral, pound, pen, coup).

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of responding to black bears killing or maiming livestock under protective controls, bears observed killing or maiming, otherwise identified (e.g., observation of ear tags) as having killed or maimed, or captured within two days of the killing or maiming in areas of low black bear density may be euthanized; all others may be handled as a Category II animal.

**Notification:** In all cases that result in euthanizing a black bear, the highest ranking, on-site staff of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Police divisions shall collaborate to ensure that notification of the action is transmitted to Central Dispatch, and the Directors of the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation Police divisions, and the Director of the Office of Communications at the earliest possible opportunity.

Susan K. Whalen,  
Deputy Commissioner,  
DEEP, Environmental Conservation Branch

Susan K. Whalen

Date: June 4, 2015