



# DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

## Protect Your Chickens from Black Bears

Most of Massachusetts is black bear country. Black bears killing chickens and damaging coops is becoming the number one human-bear conflict in Massachusetts. Coops and chicken wire provide inadequate protection from black bears. **Properly maintained electric fencing is the only way to protect chickens or other poultry from bears.** Failure to use electric fencing will likely result in loss of birds and coop damage. Unfortunately, bears that learn to raid chicken coops often end up being killed. With careful preparation and common sense, you can prevent bear damage.



## Electric Fencing Tips

- Install electric fencing around coops to protect birds and coops regardless of flock numbers.
- Keep the power (minimum of 6,000 volts) on at all times.
- Locate coops and fencing in open areas away from trees and overgrown areas. Bears will climb trees to get into adjacent coops and use the brush as cover when approaching.
- Check and maintain chargers/batteries on a regular basis.
- Teach bears to avoid electric fences. Place bacon strips, foil strips with peanut butter, or honey on the hot wires to deliver a shock to the bear's nose. A bear will remember the shock and associate the fence with pain.
- Do not put supplemental food nearby as a distraction. This will attract bears, not distract them!
- Remove vegetation on and near wires to prevent shorting out the fence.

**Download an Electric Fencing Guide at [Mass.gov/Bears](https://mass.gov/Bears)**

MASSWILDLIFE

1 Rabbit Hill Road | Westborough, MA 01581 | [mass.gov/masswildlife](https://mass.gov/masswildlife)

# Bears Live Closer Than You Think

The state's bear population is estimated at over 4,500 animals. Common in central and western Massachusetts, black bears are expanding their range east to the Route 495 corridor. Bears will spend time in areas where human-associated foods like poultry feed, garbage, compost, livestock, and beehives are easy to find. Bears will revisit the same areas repeatedly if food is readily available. Bears that are attracted to human-associated food sources can lose their fear of people (habituation). Habituated bears can become a public safety threat and may need to be euthanized. Prevent bear problems by removing or properly securing sources of food.

## Black Bear Range in Massachusetts



## Additional Information

- If applicable, consider allowing bear hunting on your property during the regulated seasons. Contact MassWildlife or a local sportsman's club for advice.
- Under certain circumstances, bears caught in the act of causing property damage may be destroyed under MA General Laws, Chapter 131, Section 37. However, this does not solve the root cause of the problem, if electric fencing and other precautions are not taken, other bears will likely repeat the behavior.
- Contact MassWildlife for advice:
  - Central Wildlife District, West Boylston: (508) 835-3607
  - Connecticut Valley Wildlife District, Belchertown: (413) 323-7632
  - Northeast Wildlife District, Ayer: (978) 772-2145
  - Southeast Wildlife District, Bourne: (508) 759-3406
  - Western Wildlife District, Dalton: (413) 684-1646
  - Field Headquarters, Westborough: (508) 389-6300

**Contact the Massachusetts Environmental Police at 1-800-632-8075 outside normal business hours, weekends, or holidays.**