

Safeguarding the Ranch, Farm, and Home from Grizzly Bears

LOSS PREVENTION TOOL KIT

Preventing and Reducing Problems with Grizzlies

While delisting grizzly bears is a top priority, this toolkit has been developed to prevent and reduce conflicts with grizzly bears. These tools are tailored for Idaho's agricultural communities. Some tools in this summary will also reduce problems with black bears and could reduce livestock losses to wolves. This overview contains a list of state and federal agency contacts that provide technical expertise, information, and cost-share funding for many of the tools featured in this summary.



Background

Livestock producers, farmers, and landowners throughout Idaho historically lived with grizzly bears in the early years of state settlement. Today, grizzlies and other predators pose challenges to those who make a living from the land and value rural livelihoods. Grizzly bears can threaten human safety and destroy property. However, a variety of tools can help reduce the risk of having conflicts with bears. Many livestock producers in Idaho have used a host of tools and techniques to protect their property and maintain working ranches. Using proven tools and working together as neighbors can be a practical way to protect human safety, maintain profitable operations, and to uphold the strong ethic of stewardship that Idaho producers are known for. We hope that the tools and approaches found in this toolkit will be useful.

Cameron Mulrony, Executive Director, Idaho Cattle Association

Zak Miller, Executive Vice President, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

Liz Wilder, Executive Director, Idaho Woolgrowers Association

About this Tool Kit

This summary was compiled by staff from the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), Idaho Woolgrowers Association (IWGA), Idaho Cattle Association (ICA), and the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation (OSC). The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture-Wildlife Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) contributed their expertise to this overview and provided a review of the tools found in this document.

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1. Neighbor Networks:

Like a forest fire safety phone tree, this tool connects residents, game wardens, wildlife managers, and Wildlife Services personnel so precautions can be taken to protect human safety and property. A phone tree, e-mail, or group text-message list can connect ranchers, landowners, farmers, and residents who want to team up to let each other know when bears are active in an area. If a local group wishes to do so, they can designate a point person to receive updates on grizzlies or other predators from local, state, or federal authorities.

- The tool works well when a designated, volunteer point-person can call their neighbors to alert them when needed.
- Several point-people can then link the larger community together and can quickly and easily alert local bear managers about concerns.

2. Livestock Carcass Management:

Livestock carcasses from natural death loss can attract bears and other predators onto boneyards and ranches. Removal of carcasses off boneyards or ranches can be a useful way to reduce the chances that grizzlies are attracted to a ranch in the first place.

- Individual producers remove dead livestock and take them to secure facilities or sanitary site.
- When removal off the ranch/farm is impractical, livestock carcasses can be moved and relocated to a remote area on private ranch/farm property, preferably with minimal human access and away from other neighbors or land users; pre-approved private/public sites (state/fed) have also been used.
- If carcasses are removed and buried, it is advisable to do so well away from home sites, calving areas, or ranch operations.

Currently there is a livestock carcass pickup program for Boundary County. This program is free to Boundary County residents and is operated by IDFG and OSC.

3. Electric Fence:

Well designed and regularly maintained multi-wire electric fences, both permanent and temporary, will prevent grizzly bears from accessing and killing livestock or damaging property.

Electric fence applications used in Idaho include:

- Calving areas
- Sheep lambing areas/bedding yards
- Chicken coops (other poultry)
- Feedlots
- Corrals
- Beehives/bee hive staging areas
- Orchards/small crop fields (corn, cereal crops)
- Garbage sites (roll-off boxes/dumpsters)
- Spring turn-out pastures
- Enclosures/pens (goats, pigs, small-stock)
- Grain bins/granaries/creep feeders
- Waste transfer sites/composting sites

For more information on design, specifications, and upkeep for multi-wire, alternating +/- electric fence, please see the following links:

- Practical Electric Fencing Resources Guide: Controlling Predators: <http://www.lwwf.org/index.php/resource-guides>
- A Landowner's Guide to Fences and Wildlife: http://igbconline.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/A_Landowner_Guide_to_Fences_.pdf (pg. 47)
- Detering Bears with Electrified Fencing: <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/livingWithWildlife/beBearAware/bearAwareTools.html>

4. Crops, Grain, and Livestock Feed:

Planted and irrigated crops can attract bears, elk, and other wildlife onto ranches and farms—these foods sources can be attractive to grizzly bears and some consideration may be warranted in terms of what varieties of crops to plant and where fields are located. Grizzlies will eat grain, cereal crops, and livestock/poultry feed when unprotected or unsecure.

Techniques being used to prevent bear access include:

- Retrofitted, high-strength steel doors for existing grain bins/granaries (requires custom welding and fitting).
- Cargo containers or sea-boxes with man-door access and skid-steer loader access (requires customization).
- Bear resistant containers, steel drums (50 gal. w/locking lids), or other high-strength containers for livestock feed; grizzlies have been known to access barns and sheds to obtain grain/feed if doors are left open.
- Electric fencing erected around existing grain bins, feed storage sheds or small barns.
- Electric fencing (temporary or permanent) of small crop fields located near ranch/farm home sites.

5. Home Protection and Household Garbage:

Grizzly and black bears can become unwelcome and persistent visitors at ranch and home sites when garbage, pet food, burn barrels or other human-based foods are available. Bears that learn this behavior can become a safety risk.

A variety of tools that producers and landowners have used include:

- Perimeter electric fencing of entire ranch home-site can create a “safe-zone” for business as usual inside fence.
 - Wood slate fences built with electrified wire (+/-) on the outside of the wood slates can accommodate children and pets inside fence perimeter without worry of shocks.
- Bear resistant trash cans or dumpsters and electrified mats and temporary electric fences around garbage.
- Garbage stored in secure steel (50 gal. drums w/locking lids) or high-quality bear resistant plastic containers.
- Garbage is stored in secure out-buildings, sheds, barns, or garages.
- Regular garbage removal, management of house-hold attractants, and pets:
 - Open dumps will attract grizzly bears and can be fenced or removed when feasible.
 - Burn barrels with a raised rack/proper ventilation can reduce the attractiveness to grizzlies.
 - Depending on breed, size, and vulnerability of dog, some dogs may be best kept in at night.
 - Feeding pets indoors at night can be a good way to protect pets and keep bears away.
 - Barbecues that are cleaned regularly or stored correctly, can help keep bears away.
 - Fruit trees can be protected with electric fences; fruit can be picked off the tree before Fall to avoid attracting bears and having damage done to trees.
 - Home gardens can be protected with electric fences.
 - Composters can be electrically fenced.

6. Herding and Husbandry Practices:

A variety of herding practices, range riding, and husbandry practices can help reduce the risk of grizzly bear depredation on livestock. Some of these practices include:

- Use of herders and livestock guard dogs for intensive herding and protection of sheep bands.
- Use of enclosures/corrals or electric fencing for night penning of sheep.
- Use of range riders to increase cattle and sheep supervision rates in high-risk areas with grizzlies and other predators.
- Use of ranger riders for early detection of livestock carcasses for:
 - Determining cause of death by a Wildlife Services investigation(s).
 - Determining if loss can be compensated by the State of Idaho or the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Livestock Indemnity Program.
 - Removal of carcasses when practical can prevent attracting grizzlies and other predators to livestock herds.
- With producer guidance, range riders can help detect sick, injured, or lost livestock and can help monitor overall herd health.
- The use of ranger riders can help monitor grizzly activity and alert producers and others (managers, neighbors) with regular updates.
- Caution is warranted in high-risk areas that grizzlies use frequently: dense cover, tree thickets, or regular movement/travel paths.
- Calving areas near dense brush, tree thickets, creek/river bottoms, beehives, and open bone-yards may increase the chances of grizzly depredation during the short window when newborn calves are most vulnerable.
- Adjusting creep feeder locations when there is grizzly activity—in some cases, feeders can be moved within an electrified pasture or away from creek/river bottoms.

7. Livestock Guardian Animals:

Livestock guard dogs and other animals (e.g., donkeys) have been used primarily with sheep to deter both bears and wolves but livestock guard dogs have also been used successfully with cattle in Idaho.

- Livestock guard dogs can provide 24-hour protection, tend livestock, travel with livestock, and can alert producers, herders, and range riders; depending on breed, guard dogs can chase-off or harass bears away from livestock or out of an area.
- Donkeys can provide 24-hour surveillance, forage along with livestock, and can alert producers, herder, and range riders when bears may be present but generally do not harass away bears like some breeds of livestock guard dogs.

For more information on emerging research on livestock guard dogs, see USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/programs/nwrc/research-areas/predator-research>

8. Frightening and Scare Devices:

While typically used as a temporary solution, a variety of tools used by bear management specialists and Wildlife Services personnel can create a fear/flee response in bears. Devices include:

- Propane canister guns
- Sirens, strobe lights, pyrotechnics, motion sensor sprinkler systems, and off-the-shelf “Critter-Gitters”
- Movement activated guard (MAG) boxes use a passive infrared detector to set off a lights/sounds to scare predators

9. Avoiding Negative Encounters with Grizzly Bears:

As a general rule of thumb, the more one knows about grizzly bear behavior and bear activity, the better the chances are to avoid unwanted bear encounters. While there is always a risk of having grizzly bears in close proximity to humans, ***grizzly bears generally avoid people.***

The following tips can be helpful for avoiding unwanted encounters with grizzly bears:

- Never approach a bear, even if the bear(s) appears calm.
- Be alert and learn to recognize and watch for signs of bears in the area.
 - Common grizzly bear sign includes: tracks, scat, claw and teeth marks on trees, hair rubs on trees/fences/posts, stripped bark, caches, diggings, overturned rocks, torn apart logs/stumps, and day beds.
- Be aware that bears will develop their own travel paths and will use berry patches or other preferred habitats on a regular basis.
- Be aware that grizzly bears can aggressively defend carcasses.
- Carry bear spray and know how to use it:
 - If a bear charges you, proper use of bear pepper spray is the best way to deter an attack.
 - If you inadvertently encounter a bear, you should remain calm, move slowly, and attempt to leave the area immediately.
 - Do not run from a bear.
 - If a bear makes physical contact with you:
 - Drop to the ground, lie face down, assume cannonball position; protect the neck/head with hands and play dead.
 - Report all encounters to local authorities.

For more information on avoiding bear encounters:

- https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/species/mammals/grizzly/close_encounters.pdf
- <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/bears/safety.htm>

10. Compensation for Validated Livestock Losses to Grizzly Bears:

The State of Idaho and the Farm Service Agency can pay for validated losses to grizzly bears. The State of Idaho can also pay for validated losses to wolves. Validated losses are currently determined by USDA-Wildlife Services. If you suspect loss is from a grizzly bear or wolf, follow these steps.

1. When possible, preserve the “scene.”
2. When possible, attempt to cover the livestock carcass with a tarp, cover tracks with a bucket.
3. Document the scene with photos or video.
4. Call USDA Wildlife Services state office to investigate: **(208) 373-1630 - Idaho Wildlife Services (WS) – State Office – Boise, ID**
 - A specialist in your area will be notified; they will contact you and can arrange an investigation to determine cause of death. Next Steps:
5. A USDA-WS investigator will send your investigation report to the USDA-WS state director in Boise.
6. USDA’s Boise office will send a copy of the investigation and information on who to contact at the State of Idaho and FSA for compensation to the livestock owner.
7. The livestock owner may now submit a claim to the State of Idaho or FSA:
 - Phone: Idaho Office of Species Conservation: (208) 334-2189
 - 304 N. 8th St. Suite 149 Boise, ID 83702
 - To submit a claim to the Livestock Indemnity Program, contact your local county FSA office.

Contacts and Funding Sources:

Most of the tools found in this guide require labor, materials, and funding. Costs can vary depending on the type and extent of each project. Funding may be available to assist with the implementation of these tools. Availability of funding and equipment can vary over time. For more information regarding potential funding and assistance for conflict reduction tools, you can contact the Idaho Department of Fish and Game or the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation.

Contact

Office of Species Conservation

State Office: (208) 334-2189

<http://species.idaho.gov/>

USFWS-ID Partners Program (FWS)

208-378-5742

<https://www.fws.gov/partners/>

Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game

State Office: (208) 334-3700

<http://idfg.idaho.gov/>

USFWS- Grizzly Bear Recovery Office (FWS)

(406) 243-4903

<https://fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/grizzlyBear.php>
<http://igbconline.org/>

Idaho Wildlife Services (WS)

State Office: (208) 373-1630

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/programs>

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

208-378-5700

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/idaho>

USDA Farm Service Agency

State Office: (208) 378-5650

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/livestock-indemnity/index>

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