

Managing Trash and Food Scrap Carts in Bear Country

Black bears live throughout Vermont. Please use these tips to help keep bears out of trash and food scraps so they don't learn to associate people and buildings with food.



1. **Use bear-resistant containers to store trash and food scraps.** Invest in a [certified bear-resistant garbage container](#) or request one from your hauler.
2. **If you can't get a bear-resistant container, add latches to keep your cart or bin closed.** Latches on each corner of the lid can keep bears and other animals out. Latches work best on heavy duty, reinforced plastic or metal containers. Make sure your hauler approves your latches. You may need to undo the latches before pick-up. [Trash Lock sells certified bear-proof latches](#). These [instructions](#) explain how to install metal latches.
3. **Store carts where bears cannot access them.** Store carts in a sturdy shed or garage and bring them outside right before pick-up.
4. **If you don't have a shed or garage, surround carts with electric fencing.** Top a wooden or chain-link fence with an electric fence or use a ground-level electric fence. You can bait the fence with peanut butter or bacon grease so any curious bears get a zap on the nose and learn to avoid the fence.
5. **Minimize odors.** Bears have a strong sense of smell. For food scrap carts, cover food scraps with a thick layer of sawdust, straw, brown leaves, or another smell-capping, compostable material. Ask your hauler what they recommend. Freeze meat scraps until the morning of pick-up.
6. **Keep things clean.** Ensure no food scraps or fragrant wrappers spill on the ground or the outside of the cart. Double-bag trash as needed to contain smells and liquids.
7. **Soak a rag or spray a sponge with ammonia.** Secure it to the inside lid of your cart, keep it in a plastic tub next to the cart (if stored inside), or place it near the door of your storage building. Reapply as needed to keep the rag or sponge moist. Many bears dislike the smell and will avoid the area.
8. **Keep carts away from forest edges.** Some bears do not like to cross open areas, like yards and parking lots. Some bears may not approach carts near buildings.
9. **If outside, tether bear-resistant carts to a tree or pole so they can't be dragged into the woods.**
10. **Install a motion-sensor alarm and/or light.** Bears may be deterred by bright lights and alarms that go off as they approach a cart. Some are solar and/or battery powered and can be installed anywhere.
11. **Train staff or household.** Make sure all staff or residents know how to deter bears, how important it is to avoid feeding bears, and what to do if a bear is spotted.
12. **If a bear tries to get into a cart, try to scare it away.** Bang pots together, shout from a safe distance, or drive a car toward the bear slowly (not too close!) and blow the horn. Report the bear visit to VT FWD.
13. **Connect with neighbors.** Ask neighbors to only put out birdseed when there is a foot of snow or more and to follow VT Fish & Wildlife's [Living with Black Bears](#) advice (secure bird seed indoors, feed pets indoors, surround bees & chickens with electric fences, never feed bears, clean grills regularly, etc.).



Contact VT Fish and Wildlife (FWD) for more advice on deterring a bear **before** it becomes a problem. **Fill out this form to get in touch:** Anrweb.vt.gov/FWD/FW/WildlifeBearReport.aspx