

# Are You Feeding Wildlife?

**YOU MAY BE DOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD.**

*People who feed wildlife usually do so with the best intentions. However, feeding wild animals almost always results in negative consequences for both the people and wildlife involved. This fact sheet contains some helpful information to explain the negative impacts that can result from people feeding wildlife, and some alternative actions that people can take to support the well-being of wildlife.*

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FEEDING WILDLIFE?

### Threats to wildlife

- Animals can become dependent on artificial food sources and may become less able to survive on their own and pass important survival skills onto their young.
- Unnatural food is often not healthy for wildlife. In some instances it can cause disease, mouth and throat injuries, and even death.
- Wildlife can congregate in unnaturally high densities at feeding sites. This heightens the risk of spreading parasites and disease (such as chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis in deer).
- Natural processes limit wild animal populations to a level where they live in balance with their habitat. By providing supplementary food, animal numbers can build to levels too high for the habitat to sustain, causing damage to the habitat. This habitat damage can be long-term and negatively impact other species as well.

- Feeding an animal can change its normal behaviour and cause it to lose its natural fear of humans and pets. A food-conditioned (has learned to associate people with food) animal is likely to approach other people looking for food. This behavior raises public safety concerns and often leads to removal of the animal.
- By providing a steady supply of food, you may be causing wildlife to cross roadways more frequently as they travel to the food source. This increases their risk of being hit and injured or killed by vehicles.

### Threats to people and their property

- Feeding wildlife may attract other, “unwanted” animals to your property.
- Many species of wildlife that become habituated to people (less fearful of people) or food-conditioned are more likely to approach and become aggressive toward people.
- Hand-feeding a wild animal is especially dangerous as animals can bite people’s hands.
- Getting too close to wild animals is a risk for people, because they sometimes carry diseases, such as rabies or leptospirosis, which can be transferred to people or their pets.

- Prey species such as elk, deer and rabbits, attract predators. Attracting and retaining these animals in a location can cause predators such as coyotes and wolves to more frequently visit the area, posing an increased safety risk to people and their pets.
- By providing a steady supply of food, you may be causing wildlife to cross roadways more frequently as they travel between your food source and other areas of their habitat. This increases the risk of motor vehicle accidents, resulting in vehicle damage and possible human injury or death.
- Wild animals that are attracted to a supplemental feed source may cause damage to neighbouring properties by feeding upon garden produce, fruit-bearing and ornamental trees and shrubs, or even people's pets.
- Allowing wildlife to access food in your campsite encourages the animal to revisit the site where they have received a food reward. This increases safety risks for you and for any person who later stays in that campsite.

### Legal Consequences

- Manitoba conservation officers can order people to stop feeding wildlife due to concerns about the health and safety of wildlife, the safety of people or to prevent property damage. Additional enforcement action, up to and including charges and possible fines, may occur if orders issued are not complied with.
- In certain areas of Manitoba, along the borders with Saskatchewan and the United States, it is illegal to place an attractant for deer, elk, moose, and caribou. This prohibition is to reduce the risk of spreading diseases in these populations.
- It is illegal for licensed hunters to place bait for the purposes of hunting deer, elk, moose and caribou.
- It is illegal to feed wildlife along provincial roads and highways. This prohibition is to reduce the risk of collisions with wildlife or other vehicles, wildlife attacks on people, damage or destruction to personal property, and having to euthanize an animal because it's been injured or has become a threat to people.

## WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE TO SHOW THAT I RESPECT AND VALUE WILDLIFE?

### Do

- Appreciate and enjoy watching wildlife from a distance.
- Keep garbage, food compost, pet food and other attractants where they cannot be accessed by wild animals.
- Learn about wild animals, their habits and how to prevent conflicts.
- Work together in your neighbourhood to help keep wild animals wild.
- Help protect the habitat that wildlife depends upon.

### Don't

- Do not intentionally or unintentionally feed wildlife.
- Do not try to approach or touch wild animals.
- Do not feed pets outdoors or allow pets to be outside unattended.
- Do not put garbage out until the morning of collection.



*Allowing wildlife to access food or garbage in your yard or campsite encourages the animal to revisit and increases safety risks for you and other people in the area.*

**For more information on reducing the risk of conflicts with wildlife, visit [www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife](http://www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife).**

**To report wildlife showing aggressive behaviour, or that appears sick, injured, or orphaned, contact a conservation officer at the local district office or call the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.**