



11.10 Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Effective: 02/23/2015
Process Owner: FOD Assistant Director

Department Policy:

- A. Managing Human-Wildlife Conflicts is critical to maintaining public support of the Department and the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation. We must balance public safety concerns and private property rights with animal welfare and science-based conservation policies, giving due respect to both the human and biological dimensions.
- B. This policy provides guidance for employees who are responsible for responding to human-wildlife conflicts and is intended to allow an employee some flexibility, when appropriate. Not every human-wildlife conflict will fit into one of the categories listed in subsection (A) and each incident will have to be evaluated on all of the circumstances for that particular interaction. This policy applies primarily to human-wildlife conflicts that involve black bears, mountain lions, javelinas, coyotes, and bobcats, but may be applied to interactions involving other animals. Conflicts involving special status species protected by the Endangered Species Act require coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Employees should also reference DOM L1.7 "Media Relations and Public Communications" when addressing human-wildlife conflicts.

Behavior Classification/Threat Analysis:

- A. Upon receiving any report involving a human-wildlife conflict, and based on the Department employee's education, experience, and training, the employee should first attempt to classify the reported conflict into any one of the following four categories.
 1. **Category I-Immediate Threat:** This category includes but is not limited to any incident that is determined to be an **immediate threat to human health and safety** because:
 - a. The wildlife is known to have injured a human;
 - b. The wildlife displays aggressive or threatening behavior as described in subsection (5)(a);
 - c. The wildlife was previously captured or relocated as a result of a previous human-wildlife conflict and continues to cause human-wildlife conflicts;
 - d. The wildlife is exhibiting abnormal behavior or signs and symptoms consistent with a wildlife-borne disease that may result in the spread of disease to the public or the employee; or
 - e. The wildlife has entered or attempted to enter an occupied dwelling or structure.
 2. **Category II-Potential Threat:** This category includes but is not limited to any incident involving wildlife that exhibits unacceptable behavior, is within an unacceptable location, or that poses a **potential threat to human health and safety** because:
 - a. The wildlife has been the subject of multiple incidents occurring within an urban setting;
 - b. The wildlife repetitively uses human-related food sources or causes property damage, which may include injury or death to pets or domestic animals;
 - c. The wildlife is injured or physically confined and incapable of leaving the area and poses a threat to humans;



- d. The wildlife's movement is restricted due to human interference (i.e., treed, cornered, etc.); or
 - e. The wildlife is a female with young or is known to have an active den in close proximity to human development.
- 3. Category III-Nuisance Wildlife:** This category includes but is not limited to any incident involving wildlife that exhibits non-repetitive unacceptable behavior within an acceptable location, or is otherwise determined to be a nuisance, but is not a threat to public safety because:
- a. It is an isolated incident within urban setting;
 - b. It involves non-repetitive use of human-related food source or property damage, which may include injury or death to pets or domestic animals;
 - c. There is no known history of that wildlife having been previously captured or relocated; or
 - d. The wildlife does not remain in or near occupied dwellings, structures, or high-human-use areas.
- 4. Category IV-Observation:** This category includes but is not limited to any incident involving wildlife that exhibits acceptable behavior in a natural or acceptable location as described in subsection (5)(c).
- 5. Behavioral Examples:** For the purpose of this policy, wildlife behavior relevant to humans is characterized as aggressive, unacceptable, or acceptable.
- a. **Aggressive or threatening behavior** includes but is not limited to:
 - i. The animal aggressively approaches a human, forcing the human to withdraw; or
 - ii. The animal displays predatory behaviors towards a human (i.e., stalking behavior, moves to intercept, etc.).
 - b. **Unacceptable behavior** includes but is not limited to:
 - i. The animal intentionally approaches a human after the animal knows the human has seen it, regardless of whether or not the human had to take evasive or aggressive action to drive the animal off;
 - ii. The animal is not treed or cornered, knows humans are aware of its presence, and does not retreat after the human takes action to drive the animal off, such as yelling, waving arms, throwing objects at the animal, or some other method of hazing;
 - iii. The animal continues to disturb, raid, or investigate human-related food sources;
 - iv. The animal continues to investigate humans or high-human-use areas;
 - v. An animal that is normally active from dusk to dawn is active during daylight hours in urban areas;
 - vi. The animal has caused multiple "nuisance" reports or property damage, which may include injury or death to pets or domestic animals;
 - vii. The animal is seen in the vicinity of a school or other area where children are likely to be present; or
 - viii. The animal remains in a residential area and is eating pet food or pets.
 - c. **Acceptable behavior** includes but is not limited to:
 - i. The animal retreats at the sight of a human;
 - ii. The animal does not leave when the human shows no signs of aggression;



- iii. The animal shows signs of curiosity when the human shows no signs of aggression;
- iv. The animal is present in an open space area or natural travel corridor;
- v. The animal engages in non-repetitive use of human-related food source;
- vi. The urban wildlife is present in an urban setting;
- vii. A mountain lion or bobcat crouches, twitches its tail, and immediately retreats or shows no signs of aggression as described in subsection (a).

B. Response and Handling: When a human-wildlife conflict incident occurs in a public or private recreational facility such as a campground, picnic area, trail, etc. and poses an immediate or potential threat to human health or safety, the Department shall recommend to the managing entity that the facility be closed until the problem is resolved.

1. Category I Response: All wildlife posing an immediate threat to human health and safety (Category I) shall be lethally removed unless doing so would pose a threat to public safety, the wildlife escapes, or when prevented by other extenuating circumstances. Every Category I wildlife incident requires an immediate Department on-site response.

- a. When the incident is a **wildlife attack** resulting in human injury or death, the Department employee receiving the call shall:
 - i. Depending on the severity of the injury; notify emergency response personnel of the incident or advise the victim or a responsible party to the victim to seek immediate medical care for the victim from a qualified medical professional;
 - ii. Notify the Radio Room to have the nearest available Department employee dispatched to the scene;
 - iii. Attempt to notify local law enforcement;
 - iv. Attempt to notify the appropriate municipal, city, county, or state land management agency of the incident;
 - v. Advise the reporting party of the public's legal right, under A.R.S. § 17-301.01 (protection from wildlife), to kill wildlife in self-defense or in defense of another person if it is immediately necessary to protect oneself or to protect the other person. However, this legal right does not absolve the individual of the responsibility to avoid further injury or death to other humans or damage to property when attempting to kill the wildlife;
- b. The Department shall investigate and resolve any incident involving a wildlife attack or human injury resulting from a human-wildlife conflict in compliance with the Law Enforcement Procedure Manual's CAT-I Incident Response Procedure.
- c. When the incident is not an attack but is an **immediate threat to human health and safety**, even though no wildlife attack or human injury has occurred, the Department employee receiving the report of the incident shall:
 - i. Notify the Radio Room to have the nearest available Department employee dispatched to the scene;
 - ii. Attempt to notify local law enforcement;
 - iii. Attempt to notify the appropriate municipal, city, county or state land management agency of the incident; and
 - iv. Advise the reporting party of the public's legal right, under A.R.S. § 17-301.01 (protection from wildlife), to kill wildlife in self-defense or in defense of another



- person if it is immediately necessary to protect oneself or to protect the other person. However, this legal right does not absolve the individual of the responsibility to avoid further injury or death to other humans or damage to property when attempting to kill the wildlife.
- d. The Department employee who responds to the report shall record all Category I calls and actions taken in the Spillman Database within 24-hours.
 - e. The Department may enact the provisions described in A.R.S. § 17-250 (wildlife diseases; order of director; violation; classification; rule making exemption) related to the control of wildlife diseases.
 - f. The Department shall attempt to notify the Arizona Department of Health Services and County Health Services that an exposure has occurred and provide them with all information available, to include any potential exposure of domestic animals. If captured, the offending wildlife will be euthanized and submitted for disease testing. The Department shall notify the victim and/or responsible party to the victim as soon as possible after test results have been received when the wildlife has caused physical injury to a human.
 - g. When the wildlife is exhibiting abnormal behavior or signs that are consistent with symptoms of wildlife-borne diseases, samples shall be taken and submitted for disease testing to either the Wildlife Health Specialist or the appropriate agency.
 - h. The Department employee responsible for the lethal removal of a mountain lion or bear shall submit a Bear or Mountain Lion Physical Check-In Card Form 3009, available in the Forms directory, and submitted to Game Branch.
 - i. The Department may release information to inform the public of possible danger as necessary, explaining the situation and the Department's actions. When applicable, refer Department Policy L1.7 Media Relations and Public Communications.
- 2. Category II Response:** The Department shall conduct an on-site visit for all Category II wildlife incidents involving a mountain lion or bear. On-site visits for other species are left to the discretion of responding personnel.
- a. The Department employee receiving the report of the incident should consider taking any one or more of the following actions:
 - i. Advise the reporting party that the wildlife should be considered dangerous;
 - ii. Advise the reporting party of the public's legal right, under A.R.S. § 17-301.01, to kill wildlife in self-defense or in defense of another person if it is immediately necessary to protect oneself or to protect the other person. However, that legal right does not absolve the individual of the responsibility to avoid further injury or death to other humans or damage to property in their attempt to kill the wildlife;
 - iii. Advise the reporting party of the need to address the cause of the problem by eliminating attractants (i.e., food, water, shelter, etc.), constructing exclusions (i.e., fences), using repellants, and harassing the wildlife (i.e., such as yelling, waving arms, throwing objects at the animal, or some other method of hazing);
 - iv. Advise the reporting party that a Department employee will respond and investigate the incident when it involves a mountain lion or bear. The employee shall also advise reporting party that the response may not be immediate unless



- the wildlife is known to be sick, injured, or confined and is incapable of leaving the area. When an employee is not going to be sent immediately, the employee may ask the reporting party to monitor the situation and direct them to contact the Department or the nearest public safety agency if the animal displays aggressive behavior;
- v. Advise a reporting party residing in Pima, Pinal, Maricopa, or any county with a population that exceeds 280,000 persons, that intentionally, knowingly or recklessly feeding, attracting, or otherwise enticing wildlife is a violation of A.R.S. § 13-2927 (unlawful feeding of wildlife; classification). Other state, local and county ordinances may apply;
 - vi. Advise the reporting party that a Wildlife Service License holder may handle nuisance wildlife or that a Wildlife Rehabilitation License holder may handle diseased or injured wildlife;
 - vii. Advise the reporting party that they may be able to handle the situation according to A.R.S. § 17-239 (wildlife depredations; investigations; corrective measures; disposal; reports; judicial review).
 - viii. Send report of incident to appropriate Department personnel for response;
 - viii. Attempt to notify the local law enforcement agency of the incident.
- b. The Department employee responding to the report should take any one or more of the following actions:
- i. Contacting the reporting party to evaluate the reasons for the conflict and recommend remedial actions to prevent subsequent conflicts;
 - ii. Capturing and relocating Category II wildlife; exception: all mountain lions, adult coyotes and adult male bears shall be destroyed. All Category II captured wildlife displaying signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with rabies infection or other wildlife-borne disease that is communicable to humans will be euthanized and samples shall be taken and submitted for disease testing to either the Wildlife Health Specialist or the appropriate agency;
 - iii. Aversive conditioning when capture is not possible or feasible;
 - iv. When applicable, enacting the provisions described in A.R.S. § 17-250 related to the control of wildlife diseases.
- c. All Category II incidents shall be recorded in the Spillman Database within 48-hours.
- d. As necessary, the Department may release information to inform the public of possible danger, explaining the situation and the Department's actions. When applicable, refer to Department Policy L1.7 Media Relations and Public Communications.
- 3. Category III and IV Response:** Incidents involving Category III or IV wildlife may not require an on-site response.
- a. The Department employee receiving the report of the incident should consider taking any one or more of the following actions:
 - i. Caution the reporting party to avoid feeding or approaching the wildlife and remain cautious until they are sure the wildlife has moved out of the area;
 - ii. Advise the reporting party to report any changes in behavior that would lead them to believe the wildlife poses an immediate or potential threat to public safety;



- iii. Send report of incident to appropriate Department personnel for response;
 - iv. Advise the reporting party that a Wildlife Service License holder may handle nuisance wildlife;
 - v. Advise the reporting party that that they should exercise all lawful and reasonable measures necessary to alleviate the problem, such as eliminating attractants, constructing exclusions, using repellants, and harassing the wildlife);
 - vi. Advise a reporting party residing in Pima, Pinal, Maricopa, or any county with a population that exceeds 280,000 persons, that intentionally, knowingly or recklessly feeding, attracting, or otherwise enticing wildlife is a violation of A.R.S. § 13-2927. Other state, local and county ordinances may apply;
 - vii. Advise the reporting party to call again if the problem persists or escalates;
 - viii. Direct the reporting party to other resources aimed at providing education and effective "self-help" conflict resolution techniques. Resources may include but are not limited to the Department internet site, brochures, and presentations provided to residents or other groups;
 - ix. When appropriate, send report of incident to Department personnel for response.
- b. The Department employee responding to the report should consider taking any one or more of the following actions:
- i. Contacting the reporting party to evaluate the reasons for the conflict and recommend remedial actions to prevent subsequent conflicts;
 - ii. The use of aversive conditioning, when appropriate.
- c. Any human-wildlife conflict that is reported as, or is anticipated to be, repetitive in nature shall be recorded in the Spillman Database within 48 hours.
- d. Other human-wildlife conflicts may be recorded in the Spillman Database at the employee's discretion.

C. Capture and Relocation:

1. When the capture of any wildlife requires the use of tranquilizing drugs, the tranquilizing drugs shall be administered in compliance with DOM C2.3 Handling Dangerous Drugs; Wildlife Capture Certification.
2. Any wildlife normally consumed by humans or used as animal feed that must be handled less than 30 days prior to, or during, a hunt season for that wildlife shall only be tranquilized as a last resort.
 - a. Any wildlife injected with tranquilizing drugs shall be released in an approved area per DOM I1.2 and shall be marked with a numbered ear tag that contains the statement "Do not consume, call AGFD ###-###-####."
 - b. A record of the capture and administration of the tranquilizing drug shall be recorded in the Wildlife Handling Database within 48-hours.
3. Department-approved release sites shall be maintained by the Game Specialist in each Region. The Game Specialist shall update the dates of availability and locations on an annual basis.
4. When no release sites are reasonably available, wildlife will be lethally removed.
5. All captured bears to be released shall be marked with two numbered ear tags; one of which contains the statement "Do not consume, call AGFD ###-###-####."
6. Data for all captured wildlife, whether released or killed, shall be recorded on a Wildlife



Handling Form 3057, available in the Forms Directory, and in the Wildlife Handling Database within 48-hours.

Cross-reference: DOM L1.7 Media Relations and Public Communications