

Ministry of
Natural Resources
615 John Street North
Aylmer ON N5H 2S8
Tel: 519-773-9241
Fax: 519-773-9014

Ministère des
Richesses naturelles
615, rue John Nord
Aylmer ON N5H 2S8
Tél: 519-773-9241
Télé: 519-773-9014



August 19, 2010

Memo to: All Municipalities in Aylmer District

RE: Dealing with Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Your Municipality

Ontario is fortunate to have an abundance of healthy ecosystems that support a rich diversity of wildlife. With the large number of people in Southwestern Ontario, encounters with wildlife occur on a regular basis. Generally these encounters are valued by the public, adding to their appreciation of the province's natural heritage. Occasionally, these interactions result in conflicts or concerns.

In the past few years, municipalities have been involved in responding to wildlife conflicts, either on behalf of ratepayers or as managers of municipally-owned lands. This letter is intended to provide you with information to assist in making decisions and/or taking action with respect to the management of human-wildlife conflicts and the protection of property.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is committed to working with municipalities and the public to support the development of community-based solutions for dealing with problem wildlife in urban and rural areas. MNR in most instances does not provide direct animal control services but does provide information to help educate the public on how to prevent and resolve conflicts. MNR also provides legal mechanisms through our legislation for the control of problem animals where required.

One of the key sources of information provided by MNR is the Living with Wildlife website:

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/FW/2ColumnSubPage/STEL02_168419.html

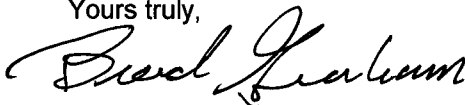
The site provides links to the provincial wildlife conflict strategies, the Bear Wise program, and a number of fact sheets and other government resources. Attached is information on topics that have been of recent local interest.

You are encouraged to explore the website, review the recommendations provided in the strategies and to look at ways to address human-wildlife conflict management situations within your jurisdiction.

MNR will be meeting with police forces this fall to discuss our mutual roles and responsibilities in managing human-wildlife conflicts. If there was sufficient interest, we would be prepared to organize similar municipal workshops to discuss wildlife issues and our programs. If this would be of interest to you, please respond to Deane Waite, Bear Technician, Clinton, by **September 10, 2010**. Deane can be reached at deane.waite@ontario.ca or 519-482-3361.

Thank you for your efforts to assist with the management of human-wildlife conflicts.

Yours truly,


for Mitch Wilson
District Manager

Living with Wildlife Information

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) recently led the development of strategies to prevent and manage human-wildlife conflicts in Ontario and human-deer conflicts in Southern Ontario in partnership with other Ministries, agencies and stakeholders. The strategies were released to the public in May 2008.

Discussions on implementation of the strategies are coordinated by an Inter-ministerial Steering Committee which oversees the Human-Wildlife Conflict Advisory Group. This group is a multi-stakeholder advisory group which has discussed issues related to: feeding wildlife, wildlife control agents, beavers, BearWise, coyotes in urban and rural areas, and compensation for the agricultural community.

MNR is committed to working with municipalities and community groups to develop community-based solutions that resolve human-wildlife conflicts.

Agency Roles

MNR:

- Provision of information on best practices, including prevention and ways to deter wildlife in both urban and rural settings.
- Informing landowners of their legal options under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (FWCA), including the use of licensed trappers and animal control agents (including issuing authorizations).
- Providing appropriate agency referrals.

MUNICIPALITIES:

- Provision of public safety (usually local police).
- Managing conflict situations on municipal lands.
- Assisting ratepayers by directing them to sources of information to help resolve their problems.
- In certain instances, municipalities may request MNR authorization to provide compensation to hunters or trappers for the removal of problem coyotes.

OMAFRA:

- Leading ministry related to compensation programs available to farmers impacted by wildlife.

Landowners and Protection of Property

- The FWCA makes provisions for the protection of property.
- If a landowner (or the municipality on municipal land) believes on reasonable grounds that wildlife is damaging or about to damage the landowner's property, the landowner may **on their own land** harass, capture or kill the wildlife for the purpose of deterring it from damaging their property.

- The landowner may use an agent to harass, capture or kill under the above act if the “agent” is authorized by the ministry.
- Any deterrent measures must not cause wildlife unnecessary suffering and only as necessary to protect the property. **This provision does not include the mere presence of wildlife, there must be reasonable grounds that they are or are about to damage property.**
- There are exceptions to the above provisions for deer, waterfowl, and species at risk.

Black Bears

- The Ontario bear population is estimated at approximately 75,000 to 100,000 animals. The closest sustainable population to this area is the Bruce Peninsula.
- Bears establish large home ranges to satisfy their biological needs of food, water, shelter and space. Juvenile male bears (less than 5 years old) wander extensively in their search for a home range, often up to several hundred kilometres. Almost always it is juvenile males that we encounter in southwestern Ontario. These juvenile bears are afraid of humans and usually run away when encountered.
- A bear’s entire existence is centered around food to prepare for their winter hibernation. Consequently, prevention of conflict needs to focus on removing potential sources of food:
 - Remove all outside food including pet food dishes and bird feeders.
 - Store garbage in a garage or other secure garbage container.
 - Clean up BBQ’s by burning off the grease on the grill and emptying the grease tray.
- MNR’s Bear Wise program has four cornerstone components of education and awareness, prevention, reporting and response. Information can be found on our website: www.ontario.ca/bearwise
- In southwestern Ontario, MNR is interested in monitoring the presence of bears and we encourage the reporting of sightings through the Bear Wise reporting line 1-866-514-2327.
- MNR will notify local media, police and municipalities when the presence of a bear is verified.
- Encounters can range from the mere sighting of a bear as it passes through the area to a more interactive encounter. For first time sightings, MNR will provide an educational message about living with black bears including attractant management for food sources.
- For any circumstances where a bear has caused minor property damage and does not pose an immediate threat, MNR will assist the landowner to develop a strategy of attractant management of the area and provide education relevant to prevention of further encounters.
- Where there is a chronic or persistent problem and a greater likelihood of potential threat MNR’s response will be to recommend the use of deterrents and in extreme cases relocation may be considered depending upon the site specific circumstance.
- **In all instances, if public safety is a concern the local police should be contacted immediately.** In such a case, the police provide first response and are the onsite authority in charge of the bear incident.

Eastern Coyotes

- In the 1800's, the coyote ranged through the western plains of North America. Genetic evidence shows that the eastern coyote commonly found in Ontario is an eastern wolf crossed naturally with a western coyote – thus the eastern coyote is a hybrid. Eastern coyotes in Ontario average 30–45 lbs, although they can appear to be larger.
- Coyotes may take sick/injured deer and have been known to take sheep and calves, however they mainly feed on small mammals, fruit and vegetables.
- Landowners having livestock predation conflicts with coyotes can employ agents as described above in the section on Protection of Property.
- Compensation for the loss of livestock is available to farmers through a program of the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs. More information on their programs can be found on their website: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca>
- Municipalities may be authorized by MNR to provide compensation to hunters or trappers as an incentive to resolve site specific cases of livestock predation.
- Coyotes can be hunted year-round but are usually only pursued in the winter when their fur is of value.
- Bounties or the indiscriminate payment for the killing of animals anywhere and anytime is illegal under the FWCA. Bounties have proven ineffective at resolving livestock predation issues. MNR now uses an incentive program to assist farmers with livestock predation conflicts caused by wildlife.
- More information on coyotes can be found on our website: <http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/FW/2ColumnSubPage/271326.html>

Cougars

- Historically cougars ranged through eastern North America including Ontario. The last confirmed occurrence in Ontario of a native cougar in the wild was in 1884. The eastern cougar is protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
- While the cougar has virtually disappeared from eastern Canada, western populations appear stable and there are signs that they may be moving east and repopulating former ranges.
- MNR occasionally receives reports from the public of possible cougar sightings. Most reports of cougar sightings turn out to be other animals, or there is a lack of physical evidence to confirm a cougar.
- Cougars are known to be kept in captivity by individuals as pets, in zoos and in other educational facilities. Sightings could also be as a result of animals that escape or are released into the wild.
- MNR investigates credible reported cougar sightings in Ontario.
- **In all instances, if public safety is a concern the local police should be contacted immediately.**

White-tailed Deer

- The deer population in southern Ontario has been quite healthy and abundant. Management techniques such as extended hunting seasons and liberal additional hunting seals have helped to keep populations in balance.
- Deer sometimes wander into urban areas and cause damage to property (eating flowers and garden vegetables) or can cause public safety concerns (motor-vehicle accidents).
- High deer population densities and a predominance of high value agricultural crops in southern Ontario have resulted in the recognition that there are some circumstances where deer control will be required.
- The FWCA makes provision, in extreme cases, to allow landowners to obtain deer removal authorizations. The purpose of the authorization is to provide landowners and managers with an effective tool to allow for the harassment or removal of deer that are causing significant damage, when other reasonable methods to prevent damage are ineffective.
- Deer removal authorizations in agricultural areas are not approved during the regular hunting season. Instead, landowners are encouraged to allow deer hunting activities on their property to help reduce local high density populations.
- More prevention ideas and materials can be found on the MNR website: www.mnr.gov.on.ca by typing "white-tailed deer" in Search.

For further information:

Ben Hindmarsh,
Sr. Fish & Wildlife Technical Specialist
AYLMER
519-773-4711
ben.hindmarsh@ontario.ca

Amelia Argue,
Sr. Fish & Wildlife Technical Specialist
CHATHAM
519-354-1425
amelia.argue@ontario.ca