

# BEAR SAFETY 2021

## Hunters:

Grizzly bears are now common in Grand Teton National Park, including in all open elk hunting areas. Several of these bears, including females with young at their side, are habituated to humans and not as wary as other bears. All grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and protected by federal law.

Research shows that grizzly bears seek out gut piles during the hunting season. During the Elk Reduction Program, the availability of carcasses and gut piles can bring grizzly bears and hunters into close proximity. Some bears will vigorously defend gut piles. This behavior should be expected in bear country, and it underscores the risk to bears and humans associated with ungulate hunting in grizzly country.

Please keep in mind that you may encounter bears – including those feeding on gut piles – at any time and in any location. Always be alert for the presence of bears and be extra aware when field dressing your elk. Do not leave harvested elk in the open bed of unattended pick-up trucks.

## Bear Spray:

Research has shown that bear spray is a highly effective deterrent during an encounter with a bear. In a *Journal of Wildlife Management* publication by Smith, et al.<sup>1</sup>, bear spray was found to stop bears' undesirable behavior 90-100% of the time. Personal defense pepper spray is not the same as bear spray. Bear spray labels will clearly state it is for stopping charging or attacking bears. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates bear spray and the minimum size can the EPA will register is currently 7.9 ounces. **Carrying an accessible can of non-expired bear spray is a requirement of your permit.**

## Special Precautions:

The elk reduction season in Grand Teton National Park opens on November 6, 2021. Park officials ask hunters to be 'bear aware' and take steps to avoid bear-human conflicts.

Hunting, by nature, is an activity that may increase the chances of a bear encounter. Hunters typically move quietly through the woods, with the wind in their face, and often in areas inhabited by bears and other wildlife. Hunting in bear country requires added attention and preparation. For your safety and the safety of bears, please follow the guidelines below while participating in the Elk Reduction Program.

## While Hunting

- ✓ Hunt with a partner.
- ✓ Carry bear spray (required) in an accessible location and know how to use it.
- ✓ Avoid "dark" timber during mid-day when bears may be using a daybed.
- ✓ Have a predetermined plan of action for retrieving game from the field before you harvest an animal.

<sup>1</sup>Smith, T., S. Herrero, T. Debruyne, and J. Wilder. 2008. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 72(3):640-645.)

- ✓ Be extra cautious after making a kill and when hunting in areas where animals have recently been harvested.
- ✓ Avoid hunting in areas where fresh bear sign is repeatedly observed.
- ✓ Avoid gut piles.

### **Field Dressing and Carcass Retrieval**

- ✓ Take extra precautions during field dressing and have your bear spray un-holstered and readily available.
- ✓ Immediately remove carcasses from the field.
- ✓ Elk must be field dressed, and their entrails and parts left a minimum of 100 yards from any road or trail.
- ✓ If you must leave a carcass in the field for any amount of time, place it in plain view so you can see if a bear is present or if the carcass has been disturbed when you return. Spatially separate the entrails from the carcass with as much distance as possible.
- ✓ When retrieving your carcass, go with hunting partners and if possible, approach on horseback.
- ✓ Approach carcasses with caution, stop and view the area from a distance with binoculars, and make enough noise as you approach to alert bears to your presence.
- ✓ NEVER attempt to scare a bear off a carcass it has claimed.
- ✓ A field dressed elk is considered food and may not be left in the open bed of an unattended truck.

### **Bear Encounters**

**Contact a Park Ranger or call (307) 739-3301 if you:**

- ✓ Are bluff charged
- ✓ Are mauled
- ✓ May have injured or killed a bear
- ✓ Discover that a bear has claimed a carcass

**Food Storage Requirements:** Bears can be anywhere in the park at any time, even if you can't see them. When not in immediate use, all food, drinks, garbage, toiletries, cookware (clean or dirty), stoves, grills, coolers and food containers (empty or full), pet food/bowls, and any odorous item that may attract a bear, must be kept in a bear-resistant food storage locker or in a hard-sided vehicle with windows closed, **day and night**.

- ✓ Improperly stored or unattended food will be confiscated, and you could be fined.
- ✓ Treat odorous products such as soap, toothpaste, fuel products, suntan lotion, and bug-spray in the same manner as food.
- ✓ Place all trash in bear-resistant garbage cans/dumpsters.
- ✓ A field dressed elk is considered food and may not be left in the open bed of an unattended truck.