

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN

INFORMATION RELEASE

March 20, 2020

Local Bears Could Reap Rewards from COVID-19

Bears are emerging from a winter of deep slumber to a new altered reality. Although not affected by COVID-19, bears may inadvertently be the beneficiary of it. How can that be?

Store shelves are emptying of foodstuffs, meat and vegetable counters stripped of product. Increased purchasing of perishables means more waste may be generated, spoil and thrown away. Restaurants and food outlets are trying to continue operations and help residents by offering more 'take-away' options in single use containers. Household waste and recycling will most certainly grow in proportion and contain a whole smorgasbord of refuse; including diapers and wipes (which bears are especially fond of).

Where does all that that waste end up? - In our curbside garbage. It is commendable how adaptive and resilient citizens and businesses are at this trying time, but we need to consider how best to deal with waste products, especially those that are wildlife attractants.

Bears can smell five times better than a dog. Rats, racoons (and the neighbour's dogs) are also well adapted to smell out possible food sources. To avoid bears and critters cruising your neighbourhood to access garbage:

- **Store** all garbage in a secure area – preferably a lockable garage or shed
- **Secure** garbage bags to reduce odors
- **Wash** all food and recyclable containers thoroughly before placing in bins or setting aside for depot drop-off.
- **Rinse** completely all containers including glass (sauces, jams, condiments, pop, juice and alcohol)
- **Freeze** potentially smelly leftovers or scraps (meats and fish especially) and place into the garbage container just prior to placing out for pick-up
- **Do not leave** garbage containers or carts at the curb.
- **Place** out garbage ONLY on the morning of pick-up.

Bears will have plenty of natural food sources to choose from when they leave the den. We all need to insure bears and their cubs can't capitalize on this potential un-natural food availability. If we don't, they will become food conditioned and habituated. We know that usually doesn't end well for the bears and puts our neighbourhoods at risk.

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For further information, please contact, RDOS WildSafeBC, Zoe Kirk at (250) 490-4110 or info@rdos.bc.ca.



Karla Kozakevich, Chair
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

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