

Food Scrap Management in Bear Country

It is possible to collect food scraps for a hauler without attracting nuisance bears.



Tips for bear-proofing food scrap totes:



1. **Minimize odors.** Bears have a strong sense of smell. To keep odors contained, cover food scraps with a thick layer of sawdust, straw, or another smell-capping compostable material. Ask your hauler what material they recommend.
2. **Keep things clean.** Ensure no food scraps spill on the ground or the outside of the tote.
3. **Store food scrap totes where bears cannot access them.** If space allows, store totes in a shed or garage, and bring them outside immediately before pick-up. Consider at least bringing totes inside at night, when bears are most active.
4. **Keep totes away from forest edges.** Most bears do not like to cross open areas, like yards and parking lots. Keeping totes near buildings may deter bears.
5. **Latch totes closed.** Locks, bungees, zip ties, or other latches can deter bears (and other animals) from getting inside totes. Make sure your hauler is aware of your latch system. These [instructions](#) explain how to install metal latches on plastic carts.
6. **If outside, strap totes to a tree or pole so they are harder to tip over.** This will help the latches hold.
7. **Surround totes with electric fencing.** Either top a wooden or chain-length fence with electric fencing or set up a ground-level electric fence. Consider baiting the electric lines with peanut butter or bacon grease; if a bear has a negative experience near your bin, it might be less likely to return.
8. **Install a motion-sensor alarm and/or light.** Bears may be deterred by bright lights and/or alarms that go off as they approach a tote. Some are solar and/or battery powered so they can be installed anywhere.
9. **Train staff.** Make sure all staff know the importance of following good practices to avoid attracting bears and what to do if a bear is spotted.
10. **If a bear is seen trying to get into a tote, try to scare it away** by banging pots together or shouting from a safe distance. If you are in a car, drive toward it (not too close!) slowly and blow the horn. Report all bear visits to VT Fish and Wildlife.



Contact VT Fish and Wildlife for more advice on deterring a bear **before** it becomes a problem. **Fill out this form to get in touch:**

Anrweb.vt.gov/FWD/FW/WildlifeBearReport.aspx