



# NEWS RELEASE

## Lolo National Forest

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## Hunters, Others Should Store Food

Missoula, MT. – Hunters and other backcountry travelers are being reminded to use proper food storage techniques on the Lolo National Forest to avoid attracting bears and other wildlife. Wildlife biologists point out that proper food storage can greatly reduce the potential for an encounter with a bear. Food storage is mandatory on the Seeley Lake Ranger District, as well as within the Rattlesnake National Recreation Area and Wilderness. On other areas of the Lolo National Forest it is voluntary – but highly recommended by wildlife biologists as a simple way to create a safer environment for both people and wildlife.

“When you introduce a bear to human food, it habituates that animal to associate humans with food and that creates a dangerous situation,” said Lorraine Brewer, Wildlife Biologist for the Lolo National Forest.

Brewer noted that with the increasing population of Missoula, area biologists are “seeing more encounters between humans and bears in the last five, ten years.” She said it does not take long for a bear to become habituated. “They will return to the same area again and again and they will teach their young to return to that area...bears are pretty smart in associating humans with food,” she said.

Food storage is easy to do once it becomes part of the camp routine. The following protocols have been established by federal, state, and local agencies – as well as the Bear Aware Campaign and the Northern Rockies Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee:

- Hang food from a pole or tree branch at least 10 feet high and four feet away from any vertical support
- Store food inside a bear-resistant container or hard-shelled vehicle
- Game meat, if properly stored in a bear-resistant container or hung from a vertical support, should be at least 100 yards from a sleeping area, campsite, or Forest System trail
- If left on the ground, game meat should be at least one-half mile from any sleeping area or recreation site, and 200 yards from a Forest System trail.

Other recommendations for hunters include: not sleeping in clothing that was worn while field dressing a game animal, being alert for bear activity such as scat, tracks and large rocks that have been turned over, avoid berry patches and cached animal carcasses, and do not dispose of gut piles near a road or trail.

Bears are in a state of hyperphagia this time of year -- fattening up for the winter, while consuming up to 20,000 calories per day. That means bears are on the move, feeding throughout the majority of the day. This increases the odds of hunters and other recreationists encountering the bruins. “We advise hunters to carry a readily accessible canister of bear pepper spray while hunting, field dressing, and retrieving game,” said Vickie Edwards, Wildlife Biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Edwards also said that hunters and other backcountry travelers should anticipate encountering black bears and grizzly bears. “With grizzly bear populations continuing to expand into their historic territories, recreationists may encounter a grizzly bear anywhere on the Lolo National Forest; so folks should be prepared, carrying bear pepper spray and storing their food accordingly.”

Keeping a clean camp is also critical to keeping bears and wildlife out of trouble, as well as ensuring human safety. More information is available on the Center For Wildlife Information website at, ([www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org](http://www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org)).

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