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BearSmart program launched for agricultural producers

Edmonton... The province has introduced an agricultural component of Alberta's BearSmart education program in an effort to raise bear awareness among farmers, ranchers and beekeepers.

"Agricultural producers have an important role in preventing and reducing human-bear encounters," said David Coutts, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. "They can be part of the BearSmart solution, by taking actions such as storing grain securely, disposing of livestock carcasses properly and installing electric fences where appropriate."

Bears eat thousands of calories daily, and most problems with bears are linked to their constant search for food. They have a keen sense of smell and are attracted to crops, fruit, livestock, bees and honey, as well as other food sources including garbage, pet food and bird feeders.

"Fish and Wildlife staff are available to provide advice and respond to problems with bears," added Minister Coutts. "Producers are encouraged to call their nearest Fish and Wildlife office, rather than try and deal with bear problems themselves."

With more people working, living and enjoying outdoor activities in bear country, the number of problem bear occurrences in Alberta has been increasing. Over the past 10 years, there have been 27 significant human-bear conflicts involving both black and grizzly bears. Two of those people were killed.

The Alberta BearSmart program was first introduced this spring, when information was distributed for residents of communities in bear country and outdoor enthusiasts. The program aims to reduce human-bear encounters, which will enhance public safety, protect property and promote conservation of bears.

To learn more about the Alberta BearSmart program, visit the Alberta Sustainable Resource Development website www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/bearsmart/ or contact your local Fish and Wildlife office.

- 30 -

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