

# Use of Bait to Hunt Black Bears

## Introduction

People in North America have hunted black bears for thousands of years. Yet only relatively recently (as late as the 1960's) have black bears been considered as a big game species. Prior to sport hunting, black bears were considered vermin and were shot on sight.

Listing black bears as "game" provided wildlife managers an opportunity to establish controls by setting hunting seasons, bag limits and other regulations put in place to help bear populations recover when determined appropriate. Regulated hunting has proven to be an effective tool for managing black bear populations.

However in recent years black bear hunting has become a controversial social issue. Both hunters and non-hunters have expressed concerns with certain aspects of the hunt. Reportedly the most contentious issues involve fair chase and the ethics of certain methods of harvest, such as hunting bears over bait, hunting with dogs, or hunting in the spring (Loker and Decker 1995).

This BEARWISE report will focus primarily on the concerns related to the baiting of black bears. However the questions of fair chase and spring hunting (namely females w/ cubs) are addressed as well.

To ensure the report findings are consistently interpreted the first step is to develop a working definition of baiting. The Wildlife Society 2006 technical review of Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species", defined baiting as:

The act of intentionally placing food attractants to manipulate the behaviour of wild species for the purpose of:

- a) Attracting wildlife to a specific location to enhance hunter harvest, trapping, or viewing opportunities;
- b) Capturing and treating animals for control of infectious and non-infectious diseases;
- c) Reducing or controlling overabundant native or exotic wildlife populations, invasive species, or problem wildlife that pose a threat to human health or safety, domestic animals, or private property;
- d) Capturing wildlife for relocation or population augmentation and restoration; and
- e) Capturing wildlife for implementation or research and management programs.

Although baiting can be used for purposes other than hunting, the focus of this paper is baiting as it pertains to hunting; therefore a more specific definition will be used.

## Working Definition

*Baiting is the act of intentionally placing natural or artificial food, or alternatively non-food materials such as scent lures for the purpose of attracting bears to a specific location to enhance hunter harvest.*

## What is a Bear Bait?

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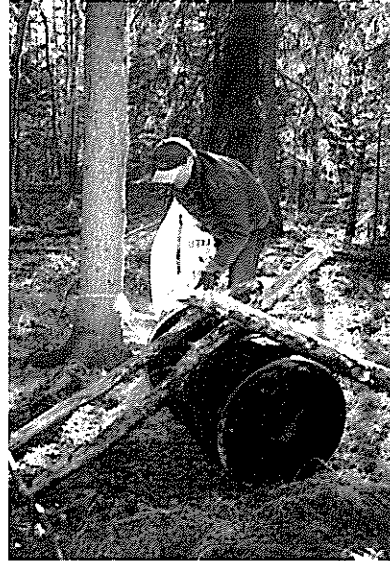
A bear bait has three important components: the "bait station"; the hunters "shooting position"; and the "shooting lane(s)" available to the hunter.

The "**Bait Station**" is the spot that the bait and lure are placed in the environment.

In some jurisdictions the bait can be simply dumped onto the ground and covered with logs. However in most Canadian jurisdictions, the bait is placed inside a container (5 to 45 gallon volume) that is either securely fastened to a tree or dug into the ground so that the bear is not able to remove the container.

For instance, in Alberta outfitters commonly use forty-five gallon drums which have been securely fastened to a tree. Some fasten the drum in its upright position, while others place the drum on its side.

Typically the bait station is placed in a small clearing in the forest so that a hunter can have a clear view of any bears that might approach the station.



The "**shooting position**" is the spot where the hunter waits and from which they will take their shots. The distance between the bait station and the shooting position can vary depending on the weapon being used; thirty to sixty feet is common. The hunter can be located on the ground or elevated, typically in a tree stand, ten to fifteen feet above the ground. An elevated position makes it harder for a bear to detect the hunter. However the higher the shooting position, the greater the chances of wounding a bear as the increased shooting angle reduces the chance of a clean kill. A lower shooting position is best.



"**Shooting lanes**" are straight lines of sight between the hunter and the bait station. The shooting lanes are cleared of any obstructions that might prevent a clear view of the bear or possibly deflect the hunter's arrow or bullet.

Some hunters or outfitters move their shooting position depending on wind direction. Each shooting position must have a clear shooting lane to the bait station.

### ***Commonly Used Types of Lures***



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### and Baits

Lures	Comments
Cooking Grease	These products are powerful bear attractants but are not used alone. They are typically used in conjunction with a food reward such as the baits listed in the following sections.
Honey – cooked	
Maple syrup – boiled	
Liquid Smoke	
Livestock molasses	
Burning bacon	
Commercial Lures – bear bomb, Bear Lure, etc Bear Bombs	
Candy baits	
Anise	
Fish oil	
Non-natural Baits	Comments
Butcher renderings – scrap meat, fat and bones	Typically used in conjunction with waste fryer grease
Day old bread & pastries	These baits are not often used alone. Typically they are mixed with other products (lures) with higher attractant value such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o fryer grease</li> <li>o molasses</li> <li>o sugar</li> <li>o jams and Jellies</li> <li>o syrup – maple as well as drink mixes</li> <li>o powdered Jell-O</li> <li>o fruit juices</li> </ul>
Cookies – <i>Some outfitters prefer to use cream filled varieties</i>	
Dog Food – <i>Cheapest dog food available (Good Old Roy – Wal-Mart). Some think higher end dog food better – more beef less corn</i>	
Oats	
Barley	
Fermented grains	
Livestock feed	
Commercial premixed bags of bait	
Over ripe fruit	
Candy – gummy worms, gummy bears, chocolate covered cherries, hard candy, liquorice	These types of baits serve the dual purpose of lure and bait (reward). They can attract bees and wasps.
Candy balls	
Natural Baits	Comments
Carcasses – beaver, muskrat	Searches of outfitters across Canada indicate that these are rarely used by commercial operators and guides.
Fish entrails	
Fish – Suckers, whitefish, tuna, etc.	

This table lists commonly used items for luring and baiting black bear. Lures are items that put off scents known to be highly attractive to black bears. Their purpose is to attract and draw bears into the bait site. Baits are the food reward that holds the bear in place.

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Most hunters and outfitters see the bait as filler which must be used in conjunction with a lure to be effective. If a bear is lured to a site, it will quickly move on if its efforts do not result in obtaining a food reward. If the bait is restocked regularly, the repeat food reward keeps the bear coming back to this site for more. In many cases more than one bear will visit the site.

A number of outfitters and some researchers believe that limiting the amount of bait is more effective than larger quantities of bait. If the amount of bait is limited to five gallons rather than forty-five, the bait site may become a limited but dependable food resource. Often larger dominant bears will exclude smaller subordinate bears from the site. Thus the chance of shooting a larger trophy animal is improved.

Using smaller quantities of baits requires the outfitter to visit the bait site more often .... The outfitter has a better idea of what is going on with the bait site ... how often the bait is being hit (visited), what time of day the bears are visiting and potentially how many. It may also be possible for the outfitter to detect weather or not sows with cubs are visiting the site ...if so they can provide the hunter with prior warning or not allow hunters to use that bait.

Some of the bait items, such as candy type baits and the "natural baits", can serve the dual purpose of both "lure" and "bait". However the "natural bait" items are not as easily obtained as non-natural baits and therefore are rarely used compared to other baits.

Opinions range on the best bait. Each hunter or outfitter may have their own favourites and swear by them. As long as bears receive a pay-off (food reward) for coming to the bait site, the bait will be effective.

From a hunter or outfitter's perspective, the choice of lures and baits comes down to two key factors: **Cost and Availability**

Many outfitters across Canada are using bait items such as grains, live stock feed and dog food combined, with lures such as livestock molasses or syrups. An advantage of this type of bait is that the bears can't run off with the bait, but rather must eat the bait at the bait station. This increases the amount of time the hunter has to access the bears condition, age and sex.

In the Northwest Territories, cost and availability could limit lure and bait selection. Those outfitters working out of large centers, such as Hay River or Yellowknife, could use lures such as fryer grease and baits such as day old breads and pastries since these might be readily available and relatively inexpensive to obtain. Lure and bait selection for an outfitter operating out of a smaller center could be more limited.

For outfitters based in the NWT, the use of commercially available lures and baits such as molasses and oats could be a viable option as they are relatively easy to obtain, transport and store.

### Candy Baits – What Not to Use?

A lure and bait type that is growing in popularity is waste candy, for instance those candies damaged during manufacture. Wastes such as these are sold to the public by the block or in 45 gallon drums at very low prices. Some outfitters in the provinces are

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bringing in waste candy by the transport trailer load. One hunting season, an Alberta based outfitter baited almost entirely with chocolate covered cherries (Alberta Conservation Officer – personnel communication).

Candy does not break down or rot as quickly as most other baits, and is not affected by rain or heat; in fact, heat can increase its attractant value. Depending on the volume of candy placed at the bait site the outfitter might not have to replenish the bait as often, lowering their operating costs.

On the face of it “candy” seems like an ideal bait, However BEARWISE is concerned that the use of candy and other high sugar products might create problems for the bears that might not be fully understood or appreciated at this time.

In 2003 the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission moved to make it illegal to place candy blocks (candy baits) as bait to hunt bears in that state. This action was prompted by requests from the N.C. Bear Hunters Association and information provided by researchers at N.C. State University who were concerned about the health and behavioural development of bears.

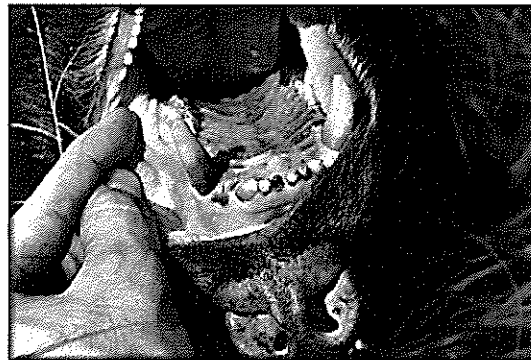
Research at the N.C. State University found that black bears exposed to candy baits were becoming “sugar hooked” (addicted) to the blocks of candy and that they would return to the baited area long after the candy had been removed. Researcher Tim Langer found that adult black bears would hang around the bait site and not move off when humans approached. Langer thought the bears appeared too sick to move (outdoorcentral.com).



Example of “candy bait” that was found in North Carolina. - outdoorcentral.com

Researchers also found that “sugar hooked” bears suffered from numerous health problems including tooth decay, hair loss, weight loss and lethargy.

David Cobb, Chief of the Wildlife Management Division of the North Carolina Wildlife Resource Commission compared the image of a “sugar hooked” bear to that of humans addicted to cocaine.



Example of tooth decay found in “sugar hooked” black bears. - outdoorcentral.com

Wildlife Commission officers found that unscrupulous individuals were using “sugar hooking” as a means to circumvent laws that prohibited the hunting of bears over baits. Hunters were placing large blocks of candy out in their hunting areas prior to black bear hunting season, sugar hooking the bears, then removing the bait prior to the opening day of black bear season. Even though the candy was not present during the hunting season bears that had become addicted to the candy baits kept coming to the sites and were easy prey for hunters.

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BEARWISE encourages the Northwest Territories Department of Environment and Natural Resources to prohibit hunters and outfitters from using candy as bait.

### *How Common is the Practice of Bear Baiting*

In Canada eight provinces and two territories allow hunters to use baits while hunting black bear (see table below). The Yukon and British Columbia are the only Canadian jurisdictions that prohibited the use of bait. Prince Edward Island has no bears. In the United States twenty eight states have black bear hunting seasons, eleven allow baiting and seventeen do not.

Canadian Jurisdictions with Black Bear Hunting Seasons	
Baiting Allowed	Baiting Prohibited
Newfoundland	British Columbia
New Brunswick	Yukon Territory
Nova Scotia	
Quebec	
Ontario	
Manitoba	
Saskatchewan	
Alberta	
Northwest Territories (requires special permit, first issued in 2008)	
Nunavut (Same as NWT, no permits issued )	
U.S.A. Jurisdictions with Black Bear Hunting Seasons	
Baiting Allowed	Baiting Prohibited
Alaska	Arizona
Arkansas (approved 2001- on private lands only)	California
Idaho (ban rejected in 1996)	Colorado (banned in 1992)
Maine (ban rejected 2003)	Georgia
Michigan (ban rejected 1996)	Massachusetts ( banned 1996)
Minnesota	Montana
New Hampshire	New Mexico
New Jersey (introduced 2003)	New York
Utah – restricted to archery hunt	North Carolina (banned 1985)
Wisconsin	Oregon (banned 1994 – repeal 1996 failed)
Wyoming	Pennsylvania
	South Carolina
	Tennessee
	Vermont
	Virginia
	Washington (banned 1996)
	West Virginia (banned 2003)

### *The Debate*

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Over the past fifteen years (1994 – 2009) four states passed legislation banning baiting. Some of the seventeen states that prohibit baiting may never have allowed the practice. Research indicates that six states have moved to ban baiting, four since 1994 (Oregon, Massachusetts, Washington, and West Virginia). In this same time period three states voted down legislation to ban baiting (Idaho, Maine, and Michigan), while three others (Arkansas, New Jersey, and Wyoming) have passed laws allowing for baiting. In the United States twenty eight states have black bear hunting seasons, eleven allow for baiting and seventeen do not (see table on previous page).

In Ontario in 1999 political pressure resulted in the closing of the spring black bear hunting season. Although the closing of the spring hunt was largely due to concerns about potential harvest of lactating females and the possible orphaning of cubs, the issue of baiting figured prominently in the discussions. Animal rights groups used the practice of bear baiting to discredit hunters and to leverage support for their cause.

In the past fifteen years the practice of baiting for bears has been the subject of highly contentious public debate on eleven separate occasions (10 – United States and 1 – Canada). In the majority of cases, three key concerns or issues figured prominently in the discussions:

- **Fair Chase**
- **Habituation** – bears learning to associate people as a source of food potentially creating problem bears.
- **Harvest of Female Bears** – primary concern is the harvesting of lactating sows thereby orphaning cubs.

Those these issues have been at the heart of the debate on bear hunting for a long time these concerns are not widely discussed in scientific literature. In their 2003 review of the ecological and human social effects of artificial feeding and baiting of wildlife Dunkley and Cattet stated the following as a possible reason for the lack of scientific study:

*"The science-based information is limited in part because philosophical differences lie at the root of many of the issues and science is not the appropriate tool for resolution, e.g. , science cannot determine whether hunting over bait is ethical or not." (Dunkley and Cattet, 2003)".*

Ethics may be the only consideration in terms of the issue of fair chase. Ethics also plays a major role in the discussion regarding the harvesting of females, but science-based information is needed to adequately answer this question as well. Regarding habituation and effects on bear behaviour, science must play a major role in resolving these debates too. The lack of science-based information may have more to do with lack of political will and financial resources needed to obtain the answers through scientific study.

BEARWISE discusses these questions using available information but recognizes its limitations.

### **Fair Chase**

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The Boone and Crockett Club and the Pope and the Young Club, two of North America's leading hunting and conservation organizations, represent firearm and bow hunters respectively. These clubs define fair chase as follows:

Fair Chase is the ethical, sportsmanlike, and lawful pursuit and taking of free-ranging wild game animals in a manner that does not give the hunter an improper or unfair advantage over the animal.

Neither of these groups has indicated that they consider hunting black bears over bait as unethical or that the practice gives the hunter an improper or unfair advantage. On the other hand, many animal advocacy groups and some hunters advocate that baiting is unethical and provides the hunter with an unfair advantage.

These philosophical differences form the basis of almost any discussion regarding baiting and may never be resolved as it is clearly a question of ethics. The question of the ethics of baiting in the Northwest Territories is informed by Dunkley and Cattet's 2003 Comprehensive Review of the Ecological and Human Effects of Artificial Feeding and Baiting of Wildlife and context previously stated by a Government of the Northwest Territories official:

*"Legislation in the Northwest Territories allows baiting for bears by permit. However, issuance is contingent upon approval by the local community. To date, no permits have been issued because most communities are opposed to hunting bear by bait (Lynda Yonge, personal communication - Hristienko & McDonald, 2003)".*

An outfitter would certainly take the above statement to mean that baiting for bears is allowed, provided that a nearby community(ies) approves. Others with less of a vested interest might take the view that, "most communities are opposed to hunting bear by bait", is interpreted to mean that in general the majority of communities do not approve and therefore permitting should not proceed though legislation provides for it.

Section 42 (2) of the *Wildlife Act* states that, "No person shall set out bait for big game, other than fur-bearing animals, without a permit entitling him or her to do so". The intent of this section is not apparent. It may have been to leave the door open for future hunting opportunities, or to make the use of bait legal for purposes other than hunting, such as trapping problem bears or for capturing bears for scientific research, or both of these reasons.

Department of Environment & Natural Resources public consultation on this issue would be prudent before baiting for bears is permitted given that the question is largely ethical.

### **Habituation**

Groups opposed to the baiting of black bears suggest that baiting may result in the habituation of bears to human scent and that this association with easily accessible food fosters nuisance behaviour (Landriault, 1998).

For the purpose of this paper BEARWISE summarizes the concern simply as:



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Does baiting of bears increase bear problems?

BEARWISE was only able to locate one research study that specifically addressed this issue. Lynn J. Landriault's 1998 paper looked at "Mortality, seasonal movement patterns, and nuisance behaviour in black bears (*Ursus americanus*) utilizing hunter bait sites in the Sudbury area of central Ontario".

In the springs of 1996 and 1997 Landriault captured and ear-tagged a total of 16 black bears, all of which were and fitted with VHF radio collars before being released. These bears were trapped at seven bait sites, five of which were established by local outfitters and two by study personnel. The majority of captured bears were tracked at least twice a week during the early spring and late fall and a minimum of five times per week during the summer months (July and August). All of the bears in this study used the bait sites established by local outfitters.

The majority of bears captured during this study were young males (mean age 4.25 yrs) the age of bears typically involved in nuisance complaints. Four of the sixteen baited bears were reported exhibiting nuisance behaviour (two adults and two juveniles). The two adult bears had frequented the local landfill and the two juvenile bears had been intentionally fed by seasonal residents prior to being reported as nuisance animals.

Landriault concluded that, "Although some baited bear black bears did display nuisance behaviour, the results suggest that baiting alone does not lead to nuisance behaviour".

Also contributing to an understanding of the question a Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife publication entitled "Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Baiting and the Use of Hounds to Hunt Bear" answered the question "Does baiting have the potential to exacerbate conflicts between bears and people?", with the following:

*Based on a review of bear nuisance complaints, including an analysis of our research bears involved in nuisance complaints, we do not believe that baiting exacerbates conflicts between bears and people. We began studying black bears in 1975 on 3 study areas in northern, north-central, and central Maine. Bears are hunted over bait in all 3 study areas, and bait was used to capture bears for research. We have captured and marked 1,641 bears during the last 28 years (1975 – 2003). Only 12 (<1%) of our research bears were involved in bear nuisance complaints; 8 of the 12 incidents were not associated with human food (4 bears disturbed beehives, 3 destroyed oat or corn crops, and 1 disturbed a bird feeder). Despite the recent increase in bear baiting, only 3 of the 12 study bears were involved in nuisance complaints since 1990.*

Furthermore, Paquet(1991:2) concluded that for the Riding Mountain area of Manitoba there was "no evidence that bears exposed to baits become problems in campgrounds, agricultural areas, or residential developments," (Hristienko & McDonald, 2007); personnel communication).

The cited information, interviews with outfitters, wildlife managers and personnel experience leads BEARWISE to conclude that baiting alone does not lead to problems

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with bears. However in the NWT it may be appropriate to limit bear bait and lure items to those items that people in the NWT would not commonly have during wilderness travel, for instance oats and molasses.

### ***Apparent Contradiction***

The fact that all jurisdictions in Canada warn against the dangers and consequences of feeding bears (A Fed Bear is A Dead Bear), while at least nine allow for the baiting of bears, could be interpreted as a contradiction. What makes a fed bear different than a baited bear?

Baiting for the purpose of hunting typically occurs in forested habitat, remote from high human use areas. Bears in these situations tend to be secretive and wary (Hristienko & McDonald, 2007). When hunting over bait, hunters conceal themselves (camouflage, cover scent) to minimize the bears ability to detect their presence and thus increases the chance for their hunting success. Hunter concealment, although not the emphasis, reduces a bear's opportunity to associate foods used at bait sites with humans (Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife).

When people deliberately or unintentionally feed bears, they are often in close, direct contact with the bears. Such behaviour presents a significant human safety risk and most legislation against feeding bears is predicated upon these incidental behaviours. When bears find improperly stored food or garbage in a camp or urban setting, they learn to associate the positive food reward with that place and possibly people. Once the bear has received a reward, it often returns or checks out similar settings (tents, cabins) in search of food rewards. These bears may become human-food conditioned and then aggressively seek out food rewards in areas occupied by people. Discouraging a food conditioned bear is very difficult; most often the bear ends up being killed – hence “a Fed Bear is a Dead Bear”.

Bears that become conditioned to receiving food rewards over a short period of time while outfitters bait the bears reportedly revert to wild behaviour after the bait is removed (The Wildlife Society Technical Review 06-1).

Based on the research to date and anecdotal evidence presented by biologists, wildlife officers, outfitters and personal experience, BEARWISE concludes that baiting of bears does not on its own lead to increased bear-human conflicts.

### ***Harvest of Female Bears***

Every jurisdiction in Canada, except Quebec has regulations that prohibit the killing of cubs and female bears accompanied by cubs (see appendix A). In spite of this, nursing females frequently appear in the harvest in jurisdictions where there is a spring hunt.

The killing of nursing female black bears and the consequent death of orphaned cubs played a pivotal role in anti-hunting groups' efforts to ban the spring black bear hunt in Ontario. The public saw the potential harvest of nursing females and orphaned cubs as an unacceptable consequence of the spring hunt. Considerable political pressure led to the Ontario government's ban of the spring black bear hunt in 1999.

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Prior to the Ontario ban, staff from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources worked with a group of black bear hunting outfitters to develop a hunting method that would reduce the harvest of adult female black bears and minimize the chance of a hunter mistakenly harvesting a lactating female. The method chosen was to suspend 2 – 3 kg of bait wrapped in burlap or onion bags 2.5 metres above ground from a sturdy tripod constructed from poles or a taut rope strung between trees (M. Obbard et al, *Ursus* 19(1):33-42 (2008)). As well, bait was also spread on the ground below the suspended bait. The ground bait may have proven counter productive as only about one-third of the bears that visited suspended bait sites stood or had the opportunity to stand before being shot.



Bait Site using suspended bait method.

ing bear. However, these attributes are best  
tral surface is exposed to the observer.

Although indicators of sex and reproductive status were easier to see when the bear was standing, some hunters did not wait for the bear to stand before shooting; only 2 of 7 bears shot at suspended baits stood up. In addition, it appears that many hunters did not have adequate knowledge of the reliable indicators of a bear's sex and reproductive status (Obbard et al *Ursus* 19(1):33-42 (2208) to assess sex accurately, even if the bear did stand up.

Regardless of these shortcomings, this method did show potential to improve hunter identification of black bear sex and reproductive status but need to be accompanied by hunter and outfitter education about reliable sex and lactating female indicators. As well the suspension technique would need to be adjusted so that the bear's ventral surface would be more clearly visible when the bear stands. However these improvements were not carried through when Ontario banned the spring hunt the year following this study.

## **Use of Bait to Hunt Black Bears**

Banning the spring hunt was seen as a major victory for anti-hunting groups in Ontario. Their advocacy will be taken to other jurisdictions elsewhere in Canada. Unless wildlife agencies have taken concrete steps to reduce the harvest of females (especially nursing females) through hunter education or changes in hunting methods, advocacy groups are likely to raise political pressure.

It is interesting to note that the percentage of female bears in the Ontario harvest before and after the cancellation of the spring hunt has remained unchanged and may actually be increasing (Ontario Nuisance Bear Committee Report and Recommendations, 2003). Banning the spring hunt seems to address the political concerns of the day but does not effectively address the biological concerns.

Historically harvest statistics have indicated that bait hunting does result in a higher proportion of males in the harvest than either stalk hunting or hunting with hounds; however it does not eliminate the harvest of females with cubs. Modification of baiting methods combined with mandatory hunter education could be far more effective than seasonal hunting bans. Further testing of the suspended bait method may be warranted.

### ***What is the positive side baiting?***

The history of baiting in Canada and the United States seems to parallel the change in perception of black bear from vermin to big game species in the 1960's. As bears began to be viewed as game by sports hunters (as opposed to vermin), the notion of selective harvest or trophy hunting for bears became more popular. Baiting was one technique bear hunters employed to achieve this goal. (M.Gore, 2003).

In Canada only Ontario and possibly Newfoundland & Labrador require hunters to take their bear meat, that is to say not allow it to waste. Hence black bear hunting is definitely a trophy hunt.

### ***Human Safety Perspective***

Hunting black bears over baits, especially where elevated stands are used, is considered safer than other hunting techniques because it allows hunters to remain stationary near their bait station instead of moving about and potentially encountering other land users.

In most jurisdictions bait sites must be marked to alert non-hunters to their presence. Signage is typically only placed along the trail leading into a bait site, so it is still possible for people to encounter the bait site without having any prior warning. However the hunter's elevated position allows him to spot people approaching the bait station and to warn them.

Hunters hunting from elevated stands over baits take only short distance shots at stationary targets. All shots from the elevated stands are directed towards the ground. The chance of accidental injury to others from shots that miss their target is significantly reduced.

### ***Clean Humane Kills***

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In bait hunting, the target (bear) is often stationary at the bait station. The shooting lanes are cleared ahead of time. With a distance between the shooter and the bait station typically between thirty to sixty feet, clear site lines to a stationary target lower the risk of only wounding the bear compared to other hunting techniques, regardless of the hunter's shooting position; on the ground or in an elevated stand. This improves the opportunity for a clean humane kill.

Hunting from an elevated stand can make a hunter's scent harder to detect and movement less noticeable, allowing the hunter to move more easily into a shooting position without spooking the bear and risk taking a shot at a moving target.

As well, elevation provides the hunter with a wider field of view, and bears may be spotted sooner than at ground level. This gives the hunter more time to plan for the best shot. Elevation also provides a shot angle where the exit wound is lower on the bear, potentially creating a better blood trail to aid in recovery

### ***Selectivity***

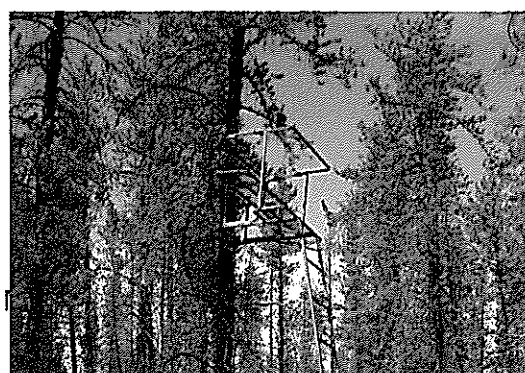
Hunting over baits can enhance harvest selectivity for size, condition and colour because baiting provides opportunities for the hunter to view bears at close range. Knowledgeable hunters can increase selectivity against nursing females or those accompanied by cubs. Hunting over baits can result in a larger proportion of males in the harvest than either stalking or hound hunting ( Litvaitis and Kane, 1994).

### ***Habitat Considerations***

Hunting in a typical black spruce forest with its shrubby undergrowth of willows and alder interspersed with numerous wetlands, can be the most appropriate setting for hunting over bait. In this type of habitat the hunter's visibility is limited. It is very hard for the hunter to move without making noise, and the wet topography may limit the hunter's movements, making spot and stalk hunting impractical. In this habitat it is much safer for the hunter to remain stationary and allow the bears to come to them.

Drier forest habitat with little undergrowth is more appropriate for spot and stalk hunting (see photo B below). However in areas where limited access tends to concentrate hunter and other land user movements, it might be safer to have hunters use established stands, rather than moving about and possibly encountering or disturbing other users.

Some regulatory and management agencies feel that adequate black bear harvest cannot be attained by sportsmen without the use of baiting. However where baiting and supplemental feeding are prohibited, others report an increase in hunter participation, and increased harvest of bears during regulated seasons (The wildlife Society Technical Review 06-1). To date results are reporting primarily only from western states with very open habitats and concentrated bear populations or eastern states with predominately hardwood stands with open undergrowth.



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## ***Distribution of Hunting Pressure***

Baiting has the potential to distribute hunting pressure. Large tracts of difficult (from a hunting perspective) habitats that would remain un-hunted can be used and optimal habitat that may be over-hunted can be controlled. However this can only be achieved when baiting is combined with regulated and appropriately sized bear management units (BMU's) and adequate monitoring of the bear harvest data. Regulating agencies must have the ability to make changes to individual BMU's should the need arise.

In jurisdictions with BMU's, outfitters are assigned to specific units and typically only one outfitter is assigned to a unit. The current size of wildlife management units in the NWT may be too large to allow for the assigning of only one outfitter per unit and too difficult to regulate the distribution of hunting pressure.

## ***What are the Alternatives to Baiting?***

### ***Spot and Stalk (Still Hunting)***

This type of hunting generally involves sitting and glassing, or moving slowly through likely bear habitat until a bear is spotted. The hunter then stalks to within shooting range before shooting the bear. This is a popular bear hunting method in many western states (Auger and Black 1995). Hunter success is generally lower than with hounds or bait. However this method appears to get better fair chase ratings from the public (Auger and Black 1995).

This hunting method is best suited for open habitats; however it can also be an effective way to hunt denser habitat which has been opened up by roads. One Alberta outfitter's description of his hunting area outlines such a situation:

"The area we hunt are Zones 346, 347 and 349. This area is all government owned land with no one living in the area. These three (3) zones are in the middle of a very large oil and gas field. Because of the need for access to well sites, there are hundred of miles of gravel roads and all these roads have had the ditches seeded to grass and clover to

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prevent erosion. The seeded grass is the first green vegetation that there is available in the spring that not only attracts bears but also attracts moose, deer and elk." (Alberta Native Guides)

In this situation the outfitter and his hunters look for bears by driving around in half ton trucks and ATVs until a bear is spotted, then the hunter stocks to within shooting range of the bear before killing it.

Hunting hundreds of miles of clover seeded ditches may be akin to simply driving around in one enormous bear bait. BEARWISE suggests that the ethics of fair chase seems a bit blurred.

### ***Hound Hunting***

This hunting method involves the use of specially trained dogs working in pairs or larger teams to detect and then track and pursue a bear until it is cornered. Typically the bear is trapped in a tree. Once the bear is treed the hunter has time to determine if the bear is a suitable trophy prior to shooting it.

Proponents of hound-hunting value the relationship between man and dog, with the excitement of the chase being as important as the potential to harvest an animal. In fact some jurisdictions have "pursuit only" seasons where houndsmen are allowed to pursue bears for nothing more than the thrill of the chase. Others allow for "training" seasons where houndsmen are allowed to pursue bears for the purpose of training their dogs. These seasons allow for the chasing and treeing of bears but harvesting is not allowed.

Data from Idaho suggests that hunter success with hounds is twice that of hunting with bait, 3 times that of still (stalking) hunting, and 8 times that of incidental hunters (Beecham and Rohlman 1994 - Utah Bear Management Plan 2000). While hound hunters are more successful than other types of hunters, they do not harvest every bear that they chase or corner.

Negative feelings about hound-hunting generally relate to fair chase, the feeling that bears have not got much of a chance to escape hunters on 4-wheelers and dogs with radio collars. In some cases fresh hounds are inserted into the hunt as others become exhausted from the chase.

In a survey of Utah state public additional concerns with both hound-hunting and pursuit only seasons were highlighted: cubs are killed by dogs on the ground; cubs are separated and orphaned from sows; and pursuit occurs at times when bears are either in declining physical condition (spring) or attempting to gain condition for winter dormancy (fall). The lack of hard data suggests there is a need for management oriented research to address these concerns (Utah Bear Management Plan 2000).

### ***Considerations and Recommendations***

In summary, BEARWISE highlights the following considerations:

- Earlier ENR statements note that most communities are opposed to hunting bear by bait.

## **Use of Bait to Hunt Black Bears**

- Given the ethical considerations and apparent lack of community support, public consultation on bear baiting prior to consideration of any permits would be prudent, and possibly constitutionally warranted with respect to Aboriginal rights.
- Bear baiting should be considered in the complete context of black bear management in the NWT.

Should bear baiting be pursued, BEARWISE recommends that:

- Use of candy as bait is prohibited.
- Baits and lure types are restricted to those that people in the NWT would not commonly have during wilderness travel, for instance such baits and lures as oats and molasses.
- Quantities of bait that can be placed at a bait station is limited to five gallons.
- Mandatory outfitter and hunter education of the effective indicators of sex and reproductive status of bears is required.
- The suspended bait method for baiting is further researched to see if it would be an appropriate method for the NWT.
- A management objective(s) for black bears in the Northwest Territories is defined.
- Individual bear management units are identified within the larger wildlife management units.
- Comprehensive harvest data collection and monitoring programs that allow Department of Environment and Natural Resources to detect change and respond appropriately are implemented.



## **Use of Bait to Hunt Black Bears**

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