Black Bear Management
& Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Updated: October 2026

At A Glance

Public Act 23-77, which took effect on October 1, 2023, updates Connecticut's wildlife management laws by strengthening restrictions on intentionally feeding bears and other potentially dangerous wildlife, expanding the circumstances under which farmers may obtain permits to protect livestock and crops, and clarifying when a person may legally kill a black bear in self-defense. The law also reinforces the state's preference for nonlethal wildlife management whenever possible while providing additional tools to address human-wildlife conflicts.

A Deeper Dive

One of the law's most significant changes makes it illegal to intentionally feed black bears, coyotes, foxes, bobcats, and other potentially dangerous wildlife on private or municipal property. Feeding wildlife can cause animals to lose their natural fear of people, increasing conflicts and creating dangerous situations for both humans and animals. The law does not apply to normal farming activities, agricultural composting, small-scale composting, or licensed wildlife facilities. Municipalities may also adopt ordinances that are even more restrictive than state law.

The Act also updates Connecticut's process for addressing wildlife damage on farms. Before DEEP may issue a permit allowing wildlife to be killed to protect crops, livestock, or apiaries, the property owner must first demonstrate that reasonable nonlethal methods—such as electric fencing, livestock guardian animals, or secure enclosures—have been attempted and have failed or are unlikely to succeed. If DEEP determines that lethal control is necessary, permits are issued only under specific conditions and do not apply to federally protected species.

Public Act 23-77 also clarifies when an individual may legally kill a black bear without a permit. A person may use deadly force if they reasonably believe a bear is about to cause serious bodily harm to a person, is attacking or killing a lawfully controlled pet, or is entering an occupied building.
The law also strengthens standards for licensed nuisance wildlife control operators by requiring training in humane capture, nonlethal conflict resolution, euthanasia methods, habitat modification, and exclusion techniques. Operators must provide clients with written information explaining available nonlethal and lethal options and report annually to DEEP.

What Does It Actually Do?

For most Connecticut residents, the biggest change is that intentionally feeding bears, coyotes, foxes, and bobcats is now prohibited. The law seeks to reduce dangerous human-wildlife interactions by discouraging animals from becoming accustomed to people.

For farmers, it creates a clearer process for obtaining permits when wildlife causes significant damage, while requiring reasonable nonlethal efforts first. For wildlife control professionals, it emphasizes humane wildlife management through training and education. Overall, the Act balances public safety, agricultural needs, and wildlife conservation.

What's Missing?

While the law addresses several important wildlife management issues, it does not establish a comprehensive statewide strategy for reducing human-bear conflicts through education, community attractant management, or expanded funding for nonlethal conflict prevention.

It also does not provide funding to help farmers purchase electric fencing, guardian animals, or other deterrents, and it does not require property owners to secure common wildlife attractants such as garbage or bird feeders.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Future legislation could expand funding for nonlethal wildlife conflict prevention, increase public education on securing wildlife attractants, and provide financial assistance for farmers implementing effective deterrents.

By emphasizing prevention, education, and coexistence alongside carefully limited lethal management, Connecticut can continue developing a balanced approach to living with black bears and other native wildlife.

Connecticut Animal Laws

Cruelty to Animals

Where It Lives In Connecticut Law

Relevant Public Acts

Public Act 23-77 An Act Authorizing Certain Killing of Black Bear and Prohibiting Intentional Feeding of Potentially Dangerous Animals.

Relevant Connecticut General Statutes

Section 26-47 Permits to take wildlife damaging crops. License to control nuisance wildlife. Permits to take wildlife damaging agricultural crops, livestock or apiaries. Conditions. Means. Methods. Times. Disposal of wildlife taken.

Section 26-80a Illegal taking of moose or bear. Suspension of hunting license. Penalties. Use of deadly force to kill a bear. Authorization. Requirements.

Section 26-25a Regulation of feeding of wildlife on state-owned property. Intentional feeding of potentially dangerous animals on private property. Prohibition. Regulations. More restrictive municipal ordinances.

Citations

[1] Connecticut General Assembly. (2023). Public Act 23-77: An Act Authorizing Certain Killing of Black Bear and Prohibiting Intentional Feeding of Potentially Dangerous Animals.

[2] Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research. (2023). Public Act Summary: PA 23-77.

[3] Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. Black Bear Law FAQs.