

Bear spray saves lives
Talking points in support of a citizen petition
Wyoming Department of Game and Fish – Commission hearing
Holiday Inn, 1675 Sunset Dr., Rock Springs, Wyo.
July 19, 2019

The problem

- Governmental data show that elk hunters who hunt in grizzly bear country are a major source of grizzly bear mortality in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.
- Between 1992 and 2017, 29% of all grizzly bears killed by humans were elk hunters. See table below.
- Of all the grizzly bear attacks on humans between 1992 and 2017, most attacks occurred on hunters—29 bear attacks on hunters.

The solution: Let's keep hunters and bears safe by requiring hunters to carry bear spray

- Hunters who rely on firearms – rather than bear spray – to stop a grizzly bear attack put themselves into mortal danger, because properly applied bear spray will stop a bear in its tracks, while bullets do not always
- Studies confirm that *bear spray*¹ saves lives – both hunters and grizzly bears
 - a. **Firearms are unreliable.** A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study found that persons who used firearms during a bear attack only avoided injury about 50% of the time. But that people who used bear spray avoided injury almost every time
 - i. Many handguns and rifles are not of an adequate caliber to stop a charging grizzly bear
 - ii. Using firearms during an attack increases the risk of hunters injuring companions or themselves
- Several **studies confirm that bear spray is far more effective, safe and reliable than firearms.** It is specifically formulated to stop an attack
 - a. A study of close-range bear encounters in Alaska showed that 98% of people who carried bear spray walked away uninjured. The 2% who were wounded received only minor injuries
 - b. The biologists associated with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee have twice determined (in 1999 and in 2008) that bear spray is far more effective in protecting people than all other methods including firearms
 - c. Wyoming's labor laws encourage private hunting guides to carry and be trained in the use of bear spray to maintain their safety

Elk hunters, who generate elk carcasses and gut piles in the field during hyperphagia, provide an attractive source of food for grizzly bears.

- Bears must feed during the short period when they are awake between spring and fall to survive hibernation
 - a. In the late summer and fall, bears need to consume sufficient calories to survive wintertime hibernation (generally the period between Oct and Apr—depending on the temperatures)
 - b. If a bear is also a cub, it needs additional calories to grow

Bear spray is recognized by many agencies and biologists as the most effective way to prevent bear attacks. Its use will keep both hunters and bears safer and avoid unwanted mortalities on all sides.

- **Wyoming should make it mandatory for hunters in the field to carry bear spray to protect themselves, their companions and our State's rare and iconic grizzly bears.**

¹ "Bear spray" refers to EPA-registered capsicum products that contain 1% to 2% capsaicin and related capsinoids.

Human-grizzly bear encounters and outcomes

Year	Total human injuries from bears	<u>Percent humans who were hunters, injured by bears</u>	Total human-caused grizzly bear deaths	<u>Percent of grizzly bear deaths caused by hunters</u>
1992-2000	38	50% (19 incidents to hunters of 38 total incidents)	72	39% (28 of 72 incidents)
2012	3	66% (2 of 3)	34	32% (11 of 34)
2013	3	0% (0 of 3)	23	17% (4 of 23)
2014	3	33% (1 of 3)	19	37% (7 of 19)
2015	2	100% (2 of 2)	53	26% (14 of 53)
2016	3	100% (3 of 3)	51	14% (7 of 51)
2017	3	66% (2 of 3)	42	36% (15 of 42)