

Town of Simsbury
Commonly Asked Questions
Ordinance Prohibiting the Intentional Feeding of Wildlife

What is the purpose of the ordinance?

Interactions between humans and wildlife are increasing in Simsbury and we are seeing evidence that bears and coyotes in particular are becoming more brazen in their attempts to secure food. Over the past 5 years, the Simsbury Police Department has responded to an average of 377 calls per year regarding bear activity. This ordinance is intended to protect public health and safety by prohibiting the intentional feeding of wildlife so that everyone in our community can co-exist peacefully with wildlife.

When does the ordinance go into effect?

The ordinance was adopted by the Board of Selectmen on July 13, 2020 and went into effect August 11, 2020.

How was this ordinance developed?

The ordinance was developed over a 10-month period, starting in September of 2019. The Board of Selectmen initiated this work after reviewing data from our Police Department and listening to the concerns of residents regarding attacks on domestic animals and livestock and some residents who reported being “stalked” by coyotes.

The Board of Selectmen tasked the Public Safety Sub-Committee with drafting an ordinance. The group reviewed similar ordinances in other towns, and sought input from a wide group of stakeholders including our Police Department, the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), bird enthusiasts, and others. The ordinance was discussed by the Public Safety Sub-Committee at 4 different meetings from September 2019 through June 2020. The ordinance was also discussed at 4 meetings of the Board of Selectmen from June 2019 through July 2020 and 4 meetings of the ordinance workgroup from November 2019 through February 2020. The ordinance was also the subject of a public hearing held by the Board of Selectmen on July 13.

Why are there restrictions on bird feeders?

The ordinance prohibits the use of bird feeders from April 1st through November 30th. Bird feeders may be used during the colder months. Bird feeders are a major attractant for bears, as bird seed is a high-calorie food source. We received input from wildlife experts at DEEP that limiting the use of bird feeders will have a significant impact.

Are there any exceptions?

Yes; bird feeders may be used year round if the feed is recognized as not being desirable to bears. According to a DEEP biologist, thistle and nyjer are the only type of bird seed that are not attractive to bears. Please be advised that hummingbird feeders are desirable to bears, and are subject to the restrictions in the ordinance.

Does the ordinance specify how garbage cans need to be stored?

The ordinance does not specifically state how garbage cans need to be stored except that they need to be stored properly. Residents should take reasonable precautions with their garbage cans so that they do not attract wildlife. Examples of reasonable precautions include:

- Store garbage cans inside a closed garage or shed, if feasible.
- Place garbage cans at the curbside as close to the time of collection as possible.
- Throughout the week, pour or spray a small amount of ammonia or bleach on top your garbage; spray it when you place it at the curb as well. The smell may deter a variety of animals.
- Use an animal resistant garbage can lid available from your trash hauler or other means of securing the lid.

Are there restrictions on composting?

Composting is permitted as long as it is properly secured, even if it leads to unintentional feeding.

Were other solutions considered, including bear hunting?

Connecticut is one of the two states in New England where bear hunting is prohibited. Wildlife policy is largely managed at the state level and any change to the state's hunting laws would need to be approved by the General Assembly.

Consideration was given to requiring residents to use animal resistant garbage cans provided by their trash hauler. Due to the costs associated with this solution, this requirement was not pursued at this time. Residents are encouraged to invest in an animal resistant garbage can if their trash has been broken into previously or if they are not able to properly secure their garbage.

What is the penalty for violating the wildlife feeding ordinance?

The ordinance allows for a fine of up to \$250 for each offense. However, our Police Department will have significant discretion when it comes to enforcement. In most instances, the police will focus on educating residents, which is consistent with their community policing philosophy.