



“Yes” on H.172: End black bear hounding in Vermont!

H.172 would prohibit hunters and guides from using packs of radio-collared trailing hounds to pursue black bears (referred to as “hounding”) from June 1 to November 30, which is almost the entire time that bears are not in their dens. This bill protects hounds, bears, and other wildlife, including deer fawns, and stops vexing trespass issues.

Hounding black bears endangers wildlife and hounds

Chasing black bears with packs of hounds from June 1 until November 30 is fraught with danger to packs of trailing hounds and to young and vulnerable wildlife. Hounding also subjects hounds to mauling by bears.

During the chase, the hounds may confront black bears while they are still on the ground, resulting in injuries or death to bears, particularly cubs. Hounds injured by bears can suffer broken bones, punctured lungs or even be sliced open.

Chasing bears in springtime harms them after a prolonged winter of no food, which is inherently unfair and unethical. During hot weather, the pursuit from hounding can cause heat stress to both bears and hounds. Bears who have been chased for a prolonged period can experience severe physical stress from their thick fur and fat layer, which they build to survive hibernation. Overheated bears can die, or if the bear is pregnant, she could lose her embryos.

In the melee between the hounds and the bear, hunters also may not take the time to try to determine the sex of the bear before shooting, putting females and their cubs at risk—even if cubs aren’t present. Mother black bears secure their cubs in a separate tree to protect them, and biologists have found that approximately one-third of

treed bears have their sex wrongly identified, resulting in cub orphaning. If a mother bear who is killed has cubs who are less than one year old, those cubs could die from slow starvation or predation.

Hounds disturb and distress wildlife, and often trespass

Instead of feeding to survive before and after winter hibernation, bears are expending precious energy fleeing from hounds. Bears must shift their sleeping patterns and become more nocturnal to avoid being hunted. In poor food years, pursuing bears with hounds makes bears expend energy that they need in order to survive. Hounds disrupt feeding regimes for both the bears who are chased, and nearby bears who are not.

Bear hounding involves letting trailing hounds run freely to pursue bears. Because hounds course across vast distances, they invariably pursue and stress non-target animals including deer, moose, small mammals and birds. In addition to bear cubs, newborn deer fawns and other young and vulnerable wildlife are exposed to packs of hounds who can injure or kill them. Hounds do not understand property lines, and significant conflicts between hound hunters, private landowners, other hunters, and outdoor recreationists can result. Hounding isn’t fair chase hunting. Please vote “yes” on H. 172.