



# Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program

## Product Testing Training Manual

### Field Testing with Wild Bears



Photo by Jon Gassett, Wildlife Management Institute.

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# Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program

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# Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the Wildlife Management Institute's (WMI) program for testing devices designed to wildlife feed products, including the delivery of toxicants for feral hogs. For the purposes of this document, Toxicant Delivery Devices (TDDs) and wildlife feeders will be subjected to the same field tests for certification as bear resistant. The protocol for this program was developed by the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) Large Carnivore and Feral Swine Committees.

SEAFWA is a group of state agencies with primary responsibility for management and protection of the fish and wildlife resources in 15 states, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. Member states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. One of SEAFWA's activities is to "sponsor cooperative fish and wildlife programs among member states and other entities to address issues of mutual interest and to benefit fish and wildlife resources." The SEAFWA protocol that is administered by WMI's Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program was implemented to benefit the region's increasing black bear and human population.

Recovering and managing black bears in the Southeast becomes increasingly complex as numbers of people and bears on the landscape continue to grow. Unsecured human food, garbage and other attractants is now a major source of human-bear conflicts. That makes availability of reliable products to secure a variety of bear attractants vitally important to prevention of conflicts and in many cases, permanent removal of bears. This is particularly important for areas that also have feral swine, which may be subjected to eradication techniques using toxicants that may also be harmful to bears and other non-target wildlife. The objective of this program is to provide information about the effectiveness of TDDs to bears that may occupy the same areas. Ultimately, our goal is to provide state and federal management agencies with the information they need to effectively deliver toxicants to feral swine without adversely impacting black bears and other non-target wildlife.



# Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program

## Program Purpose

The purpose of WMI's Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program is to:

1. Identify effective products that minimize easy and direct access to attractants by black bears.
2. Evaluate a product's ability to prevent a black bear from accessing the contents contained within that product, including products designed or marketed to deliver wildlife toxicants, wildlife feeds, and other substances that may attract black bears.
3. Facilitate the development of new and improved bear-resistant products and options for deterring bears.
4. Provide consistent and science-based guidance, including a list of products that passed the WMI Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program, to the public, state and federal management agencies, and wildlife professionals.

Please note that passing the testing process does not assert that these products are 100% bear-proof and does not guarantee that products will never be accessed by bears. Passing the test also does not guarantee that small amounts of the contents of the containers won't be able to leak or spill out.

The WMI Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program for evaluating TDDs and Wildlife Feeders is only conducted following the SEAFWA protocol for field testing with wild bears and feral swine.

## Testing Procedures for Toxicant Delivery Devices

### Conducting the Toxicant Delivery Device (TDD) Test

1. TDD and Wildlife Feeder testing runs from April 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> and is conducted in a wild setting where sufficient bears and feral hogs are present.

2. Prior to testing, the product manufacturer must provide WMI with a product submission form along with all background information, technical data, and close-up photographs of the product showing all major surfaces.
3. The manufacturer may indicate their preferred testing date(s). However, WMI will determine and provide to the manufacturer the optimal testing dates and location, depending on animal activity, staff availability, etc. WMI will also provide the manufacturer with a secure shipping address for products and bait they wish to ship in preparation for testing.
4. Local wildlife agency staff will be responsible for ensuring that products shipped by the manufacturer are securely stored in an appropriate facility (most often a WMA, regional, or field office).
5. In addition to the product to be tested, the manufacturer is responsible for providing all equipment, supplies, baits, and any other materials necessary to bring the product to operational status in the field.
6. Manufacturers are responsible for having personnel (technician) available (preferably in proximity to the site) for the four-week testing period. The technician will be responsible for product setup, bait loading, and product removal upon test completion. Once the test period is initiated, the manufacturer's technician will be responsible for replenishing baits at the direction of WMI.
7. WMI will be responsible for meeting the manufacturer's technician on site for initial setup, installing and activating the monitoring equipment, conducting final product evaluation, and removing and securing monitoring equipment upon conclusion of the test. Local wildlife agency staff providing routine maintenance to the monitoring and recording equipment during the testing phase.
8. Local wildlife agency staff will maintain and securely store monitoring equipment when not in use. WMI will be responsible for directing manufacturer's technician to the test site and approving that final clean-up after the test meets the landowner's expectations. Agency staff will NOT be responsible for any part of the setup, testing, or evaluation of the products being tested.
9. On the starting date of the test, product technician will accompany WMI staff and/or local wildlife agency staff to the testing site to setup and load the product with bait. State agency and WMI staff will NOT be responsible for set-up, bait loading, refilling, maintenance, tear-down, and product removal.
10. The TDD should be setup according to the manufacturer's specifications. If the TDD is dedicated to delivering a specific toxicant, it shall be setup and utilized per label directions of the toxicant as registered with the U.S. EPA. Baits used for product testing

should be placebo baits (non-toxic) that are substantially similar in size, weight, and conformation to the toxicant the TDD is designed to deliver. Other attractants (grains, scents, etc.) may also be used as an attractant in addition to the placebo baits.

11. TDD products that require electricity or battery power must be tested without a power source.
12. Due to the nature of wild bears and feral swine, the product is required to remain at the testing site for the entire 4-week testing period unless the product fails prematurely, or the manufacturer chooses to terminate the test and withdraw the product from testing.
13. The testing period must include a minimum of six separate attempts by bears to access the baits contained within the TDD. At least three attempts by bears should occur after feral hogs have accessed baits from the TDD five or more times.
14. No maintenance will be allowed on the product during the testing period. Tampering or interfering with the monitoring equipment by the technician in any way will result in an immediate failure of the test.

#### **Completing the Toxicant Delivery Device Test**

1. The manufacturer's technician shall remove the tested product immediately upon either completion of the test, or in the case of product failure. Manufacturer's wishing to donate tested products to the state wildlife agency should coordinate that transfer through WMI.
2. The manufacturer's technician shall be responsible for cleanup of the testing site to a level that meets the approval of the local wildlife staff and/or landowner.
3. WMI and/or Agency staff will remove monitoring equipment, ensure that it is stored properly.
4. Agency staff may also make and transmit notes or photographs of damage to the tested product at their own discretion.

#### **Documenting and Reporting Toxicant Delivery Device Results**

1. All TDD tests are scored on a Pass/Fail basis. A product will be considered to have failed if any of the following conditions are met:
  - a. The product is rendered non-functional during the test,
  - b. A bear accesses the bait contained within the TDD,

- c. A bear causes spillage of baits from TDD, or
  - d. Baits within the TDD become available to bears after wild hog contacts.
- 2. Spillage resulting from TDD use by animals other than bears, which then becomes unsecured and available to bears may not result in a test failure. This pass/fail determination for bait spillage caused by animals other than bears is at the sole discretion of WMI and the Testing Program Coordinator.
- 3. Due to potential exposure to spillage of toxicants, a successful test of a TDD does not constitute an endorsement by WMI, SEAFWA, the Testing Program Coordinator, or any state or federal fish and wildlife agency for the use of toxicants or any delivery system for toxicants to reduce or eradicate feral hogs.
- 4. Upon completion of the test, WMI staff will evaluate the product in situ and determine if the requirements set forth in the protocol are met. WMI staff will store all records (videos, photographs, notes, evaluation forms, etc.) in a shared Dropbox folder. These files may include videos and photographs from the monitoring equipment as well as any notes or photographs of product damage, bait spillage, etc. relevant to the test.
- 5. A determination of whether a product passes the TDD test is at the sole discretion of WMI and the Testing Program Coordinator. WMI staff and the Testing Program Coordinator will independently review all testing results. This determination is final.
- 6. Passing the test applies only to the specific product as evaluated. If a product's design and/or specifications change, such as by altering materials, dimensions, hinges, latches, or other features of the container, the product will likely require retesting. Contact WMI or the Testing Program Coordinator for questions regarding modified products (please see end of this document for contact information).
- 7. WMI or the Testing Program Coordinator will notify product submitters that testing is complete and will advise whether the product(s) has/have passed or failed testing (i.e., met or did not meet SEAFWA requirements for bear-resistant products). This determination is final.
- 8. Manufacturers/vendors with products that are approved will receive a letter confirming the product(s) approved status and assigning a unique approval number. This number applies only to the specific product model(s) that is approved.
- 9. The letter will also provide instructions for proper display of the assigned number(s) on the corresponding product(s) and how to include a program logo image that can be utilized for display. This image will show that the product passed the WMI Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program.

10. The approval number must be visibly displayed on approved products. The number may be etched, molded, stamped, or otherwise embossed, stickered or labeled onto the product.

**IMPORTANT:** The official list of products that pass will appear on the WMI website at <https://wildlifemanagement.institute>. If a specific product does not appear on this list, it is not considered to be a bear-resistant product.

### **Other Noteworthy items**

Manufacturers/vendors wishing to obtain an SD card of testing video ***must*** indicate their preference on the Product Submission Form. There will be an additional and separate fee charged for copies of video footage. Video footage is not edited. Requests for testing videos made after the testing process has been completed will not be honored.

Bear-resistant products submitted for testing become the property of the testing program if appropriate arrangements for disposition have not been made within 60 days after product testing.

#### **Field Testing Contact:**

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**Appendix A**

**WMI BEAR-RESISTANT PRODUCT FIELD TESTING FORM**

TEST DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_ CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ WEB SITE: \_\_\_\_\_

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PRODUCT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ MODEL NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

PRODUCT RE-TEST: Y / N

TEST

SITE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF STATE BIOLOGIST:

\_\_\_\_\_

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VISUAL INSPECTION: Pass / Fail

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PICS BEFORE TEST: \_\_\_\_\_ PICS AFTER TEST: \_\_\_\_\_ VIDEO: \_\_\_\_\_

BAIT USED: \_\_\_\_\_

WEATHER: \_\_\_\_\_

TEMPERATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

PRODUCT BREACHED: YES / NO

NUMBER OF BEARS OBSERVED: \_\_\_\_\_ NUMBER OF HOGS

OBSERVED: \_\_\_\_\_

DAMMAGE COMMENTS:

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SD CARD: YES / NO REGULAR SHIP \_\_\_\_\_ EXPRESS SHIP \_\_\_\_\_

DATE MAILED \_\_\_\_\_

PRODUCT DISPOSTION: SUPPLIER KEEPS \_\_\_\_\_ TESTING GROUP KEEPS \_\_\_\_\_

**TEST RESULT: PASS / FAIL**

**DATE FILES UPLOADED TO DROP BOX: \_\_\_\_\_**



# Black Bear-Resistant Product Testing Program

## Appendix B

### Documents Referenced

Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. 2020. Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Bear-Resistant Products Testing Program Testing Protocol For the 2020 Testing Season. 19 pp.

USDA Forest Service. 1989. Bear Resistant Containers – Minimum Design and Structural Standards; Inspection and Testing Methodology. Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee. 35 pp.