



HB 468 is unnecessary! Say “No!” to black bear hounding!

HB 468 would allow hunters and guides to use packs of radio-collared trailing hounds to pursue black bears (“hounding”) from den emergence until July 31 annually. This bill would put hounds, bears, and other wildlife – such as elk calves and deer fawns – in danger, and exposes houndsmen to potential grizzly bear attacks. Already, over 1,000 black bears are hunted in MT annually.

Hound hunting black bears endangers wildlife, hounds and hunters

Chasing black bears with packs of hounds from springtime den emergence until July 31 is fraught with danger to the houndsmen, their hounds and to young and vulnerable wildlife. Hounding subjects hounds to mauling by bears.

Springtime hounding exposes houndsmen to potential grizzly bear attacks. And hounding in grizzly country puts hunters and guides into legal jeopardy if a grizzly bear “take” occurs as they are protected under the Endangered Species Act.

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 – including federally protected grizzly bear 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. Hounds chasing starving bears is unfair. 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. Over-heated 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 has cubs less than one-year old and she is killed, those cubs could die from slow starvation or predation.

Hounds disturb and distress wildlife and often trespass on private property

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 elk, deer, moose, small mammals and birds. In addition to bear cubs, this bill would expose newborn elk calves, deer fawns, and other wildlife to packs of hounds who can injure or kill young and vulnerable wildlife. Hounds do not understand property lines and significant conflicts between hound hunters, private landowners, other hunters, and outdoor recreationists can result. Already over 1,000 bears are hunted annually in Montana—springtime hounding is unnecessary and unfair to bears.