

## SUMMARY

The use of bait for the purpose of hunting brown bears (*Ursus arctos*) was prohibited in Sweden in 2001 following, among other things, concerns that this form of hunting could create so-called problem bears, as the majority of scientific studies investigating problem bears have found a link between this and the feeding of bears in close proximity to humans and human activity.

Many hunters in Sweden feel that bait hunting should be allowed, since it is considered to be a safer form of bear hunting. The hunter also has the opportunity to assess whether the bear approaching the bait is a female with cubs, and could thereby avoid shooting members of a family group, which are legally protected in Sweden.

To assess the pros and cons of using bait for the purposes of hunting bears, managers and researchers in Europe (including Russia) and North America were asked about their experiences of baiting and hunting bears over bait. This included managers in areas where bait hunting bears is prohibited, to find out the reasons and reasoning behind the decisions to permit, or prohibit, bait hunting of bears.

The use of bait to attract brown bears is permitted in Estonia, Finland, Croatia, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and to a certain extent Sweden and Norway; however, the hunting of brown bears over bait is only permitted in Estonia, Croatia, Russia, Slovakia and Slovenia. In North America grizzly/brown bear (*U. arctos/ U. a. horribilis*) hunting is permitted only in Alaska (USA), and Alberta, British Columbia, the former Northwest Territories and Yukon (Canada), but hunting brown/grizzly bears over bait is prohibited, except for one area (Game Management Unit) in Alaska. Black bear (*U. americanus*) hunting is permitted in 29 states in the USA whereof 11 permit bait hunting; whilst 12 of the Canadian provinces/territories permit black bear hunting whereof 9 permit and 8 actually conduct black bear hunting over bait. Bait hunting is carried out in a regulated and restricted form in both Europe and North America, which limits both the placement of bait stations and the duration of baiting, as well as how the bait hunt is conducted (e.g. weapon type, bait material etc.).

The managers' experiences and opinions differ widely from one another, but common for the managers of areas that permit bait hunting is that they do not feel there are any problem bears arising as a result of bait hunting. Bait hunting is perceived as different from other forms of feeding of bears (i.e. badly stored garbage, bird feeders etc.), as it is limited in its extent both in time and space. There is no unified perception of how baiting affects the bears. Based on the managers' experiences it is impossible to discern whether females with cubs are attracted to or avoid bait sites, or if there is a difference between male and female use, or between different age groups. Nor is there much information available in the scientific literature. What is clear from speaking to these managers is that bait hunting and baiting are questions that operate at many different levels; from the biological, health and environmental sciences, to the social and political.

There are potential advantages as well as disadvantages with the use of bait hunting – and baiting – for bears, but these are seemingly affected by local factors such as the bear population dynamics, density and structure; the general health of the local wildlife population; the manner in which the hunt is structured, licensed and executed, as well as public opinion. Therefore, it may be difficult to base a decision regarding the use of bait for bear hunting in Sweden on the experiences of other countries. Instead one should consider collecting further information about the situation in Sweden to base future decisions on more relevant knowledge.