



Information About Wildlife Feeding Rules and Penalties

- The FWC has several rules that prohibit feeding wildlife, including bears, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, pelicans, sandhill cranes, bald eagles, alligators and crocodiles.
- The FWC identified some issues regarding the effectiveness of wildlife feeding rules. The severity of the previous penalty system resulted in a challenging situation for enforcement of wildlife feeding rules.
- The 2015 Legislature approved amendments to Section 379.412 Florida Statutes to create a tiered penalty structure for violations of all of the FWC's wildlife feeding rules except Marine Fish.
- Previously, any violation of FWC rules prohibiting the feeding of wildlife would result in a 2nd degree misdemeanor, punishable of up to 60 days in jail and up to a \$500 fine, at the discretion of the judge.
- The new penalty system progresses from a civil penalty to a criminal penalty as multiple offenses occur. With this new penalty structure, fewer criminal violations will likely occur, reserving the more severe penalty for those violators who continually choose to disobey the rules despite receiving education, warnings, and a civil penalty.
- The new penalty system starts with a civil penalty of \$100, and then gradually increases in severity. For bears and crocodilians (i.e., alligators and crocodiles), subsequent offenses increase the severity of the criminal infraction and penalties, increasing for the 3rd to 4th offenses.

Offense	Criminal Penalty Level	Fines	Incarceration	Applies to Which Rules
1st	None	\$100	None	All except Marine Fish
2nd	2 nd degree misdemeanor	Up to \$500	Up to 60 days	All except Marine Fish
3rd	1 st degree misdemeanor	Up to \$1,000	Up to 1 year	Bear and Crocodilians
4th	3 rd degree felony	Up to \$5,000	Up to 5 year	Bear and Crocodilians

- The penalties apply to a violation of rules or orders of the commission which prohibit or restrict the following: feeding wildlife or freshwater fish with food or garbage, attracting or enticing wildlife or freshwater fish with food or garbage, or allowing the placement of food or garbage in a manner that attracts or entices wildlife or freshwater fish.

- They do not apply to rules or orders of the commission which relate to animals that are held in captivity, restrict the taking or hunting of species over bait or other intentionally placed or deposited food, or restrict the taking or hunting of species in proximity to feeding stations.
- A new species-specific subsection (4) of Florida administrative code (Rule 68A-4.001), approved by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in June 2015 and effective Aug. 6, 2015, prohibits feeding of black bears.
 - It differentiates between intentional and unintentional feeding of bears.
 - Unintentional feeding of bears requires a written notice before a warning or citation can be issued.
 - Placing food or garbage, allowing the placement of food or garbage, or offering food or garbage that attracts bears and is likely to create or creates a nuisance is prohibited after receiving prior written notification from the FWC.
- Coyotes were added in June 2015 by the FWC to the list of wildlife species in Florida administrative code (Rule 68A-4.001) for which feeding is prohibited.
- Coyotes are attracted to human-provided foods such as garbage and will prey on other animals attracted to human-provided foods. Adding coyotes to the list of species will further efforts to keep coyotes from frequenting human communities and becoming a public nuisance.