



Cougars (Puma concolor) are rare in Manitoba, and tend to range over large areas.

COEXISTING WITH COUGARS

While cougars are known to exist in Manitoba, these animals tend to range over large areas and it remains uncertain whether a resident breeding population has been established in the province. Given cougars are uncommon in Manitoba, conflicts with people are rare. However, Manitobans should understand how to coexist with these predators.

There are things you can do to reduce the risk of conflicts with cougars. This fact sheet offers some helpful advice to protect yourself, your family, your property and cougars.

THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COUGARS

- Cougars are most active between dusk and dawn.
- Cougars are ambush predators that often stalk their prey and usually attack the prey animal's neck or head.
- Although cougars are capable of seriously injuring or killing humans, cougar attacks on people are extremely rare.
- Cougars primarily consume ungulates such as white-tailed deer, but will opportunistically prey or scavenge upon other animals as well.
- Cougars have been known to attack livestock and pets.
- The Wildlife Act prohibits the killing of a cougar in defence of property.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE THE RISK OF CONFLICT

Secure attractants

- Do not feed wildlife in your yard, such as deer or raccoons which are natural prey for cougars.
- Feed pets indoors and store food waste in a location that is inaccessible to wildlife. Pet food and food waste can attract other small animals that cougars may prey upon.
- Bird feeding is not recommended from April to November. If you choose to feed birds in the winter, feeders should not hang below two metres so as not to attract deer (a primary prey species for cougars). Clean up any spilled seed regularly.
- Remove ripened fruit daily as this can attract prey species.

Reduce risks for children and pets

- Pets can be preyed upon by cougars and should not be allowed to roam freely. Keep pets closely supervised and inside at night or in a secure, fully-enclosed kennel.
- Cougars will investigate potential prey which may include children, possibly because of their high-pitched voices, small size and erratic movements. To reduce risk, encourage young children to play in groups, in fenced areas and under adult supervision. Ensure small children are home before dusk and stay inside until after dawn. A radio playing in the area can act as a noise deterrent.
- Teach children about cougars and what to do if they encounter one. Young children should be taught never to approach an animal unless it is on a leash and the owner says it is okay.

Reduce risk when recreating or working in wilderness areas

- Try to travel in groups of two or more.
- Make enough noise to prevent surprising a cougar.
- Carry bear deterrent spray (also effective on cougars) and a sturdy walking stick and/or fixed-blade knife.
- Keep small children near to you. Don't allow them to run ahead or lag behind a group.
- Keep dogs on leash and under control.
- Maintain awareness of your surroundings, including the trees overhead.
- Watch for signs that cougars may be in the area (droppings, tracks, cached food – an animal carcass partially buried under dirt and leaves).
- Avoid areas where an animal carcass may be located (indicated by a foul odour or a gathering of scavenger birds).

Reduce risks in your yard

- Remove any debris piles or dense low-lying vegetation that could provide cover for cougars or their prey.
- Prevent access to any open areas under your deck, shed or other structures.
- Motion-activated lights, alarms or water sprayers can discourage unwanted visits from wildlife at night.

Reduce risks for livestock

- Consider night-penning livestock and/or using livestock guardian dogs for protection.
- Practice good animal husbandry.
- Properly dispose of deadstock.



Cougars are excellent tree climbers.



A female and her kitten feed on a deer; a typical prey species for cougars.

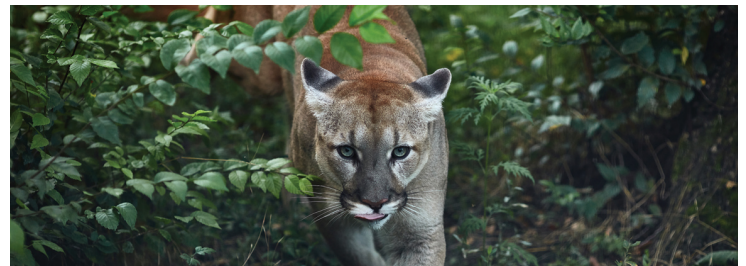
IF YOU ENCOUNTER A COUGAR

In a cougar encounter:

- Never approach a cougar. Although cougars will normally avoid a confrontation, all cougars are unpredictable. A cougar may choose to defend its kill or young.
- Always give a cougar an escape route.
- Stay calm; maintain eye contact; talk to the cougar in a confident voice.
- Pick up all small children immediately. Children frighten easily and their rapid movements may provoke an attack.
- Do **not** run! Try to back away from the cougar slowly. Sudden movement or flight may provoke an instinctive attack.
- Do **not** turn your back on the cougar. Face the cougar and remain upright.
- Do all you can to appear larger – raise your jacket above your head; wave sticks or branches about. Do **not** crouch down or try to hide.
- Report any cougar sightings to your local conservation officer.

If a cougar approaches:

- Arm yourself with a large stick, throw rocks, and speak loudly and firmly. Convince the cougar that you are a threat not prey.
- Sustained yelling (not high-pitched screaming) can be an effective deterrent in a cougar encounter. Consider carrying an air horn for this purpose. The single noise of a shot from a firearm is usually not effective in scaring off a cougar.
- If a cougar approaches within range, deploy bear deterrent spray.
- If a cougar attacks, fight back! Where there have been cougar attacks, many people have survived by fighting back with anything at hand, including rocks, sticks, garden tools, fishing poles and bare fists.



Cougars typically use cover to stalk their prey and launch a surprise attack from behind.

For more information on reducing the risk of conflicts with cougars and other wildlife, visit www.manitoba.ca/human-wildlife.

To report wildlife showing aggressive behaviour, or that appears sick, injured, or orphaned, contact a conservation officer at the local district office or call the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.