

Panthers attack record number of farm animals in Florida

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A record number of Florida panther attacks on farm animals and pets took place this year, in what the state wildlife commission says is a consequence of the endangered cat's increased population.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission on Friday confirmed 32 incidents of fatal panther attacks on animals such as goats, sheep, calves, dogs and cats, with more than 50 animals killed. This year also saw a record 20 [panthers](#) killed by vehicles.

The commission attributed the increase in killings to the success of state and federal efforts to increase the panther's population. The number of panthers today is estimated at 100 to 180, with the top figure representing a recent upward revision from 160. During the 1970s, the population may have fallen as low as 30.

"Over the past 40 years, Florida panther conservation efforts have resulted in the panther population growing significantly from the 1970s, when the panther was first federally listed as endangered," the agency said. "As the [population](#) grows, the chance for interaction between the large cats and humans also increases - which can be bad for both people and panthers."

Although panthers tend to avoid people, there have been occasional reports of threatening movements by the big cats. The commission urged anyone who encounters a panther to give it space, avoid running, maintain [eye contact](#), avoid crouching or bending over - which would

make you prey-sized - and fight back if attacked.

Although it is a crime to deliberately harm an endangered species, the commission said anyone who hurts or kills a panther in self defense would not be prosecuted.

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