



**PETA**

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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## Deer Control in Urban Areas

As natural habitats are stripped away, wildlife species like deer can thrive in urban areas if steady food sources are provided. Municipalities seeking to reduce deer numbers can do so effectively and humanely by implementing an integrated, adaptive approach. Please consider the following:

Bowhunting is among the cruelest forms of wildlife control. Bowhunters often spend hours tracking the blood trails of animals before finding them. Many are not found, and their deaths are slow and painful.<sup>i</sup> It can take *weeks* for some to succumb to their injuries.

Trapping deer is also inhumane because animals suffer immensely when they are trapped and trucked;<sup>ii</sup> if animals are relocated, those who survive have trouble finding adequate sources of food, water, and shelter, and are mauled by predators or succumb slowly to foreign diseases/parasites.<sup>iii</sup>

**Even the use of sharpshooters (using *firearms*) would be far less cruel than these methods.**

Regardless, lethal methods never work in the long run to control deer populations, and will actually backfire. When animals are killed/removed from the area, a spike in the food supply results.<sup>iv</sup> This causes survivors and newcomers to breed at an accelerated rate, and populations actually *increase*.<sup>v</sup> Further, when adults are removed, families are torn apart and vulnerable young are left to starve. The result is a pointless, never ending, and expensive killing cycle.

Effective deer control plans focus on containing food sources in residential areas<sup>vi</sup> and habitat modification in riparian and wildlife corridors. We suggest that officials:

- Reduce food sources, especially in restoration and riparian areas, by wrapping saplings shorter than 4-feet using corrugated plastic tubes/sleeves, deer netting, or mesh. Trim back low-hanging tree branches and keep grasses/weeds cut short.
- Install deer fencing *strategically* along wildlife corridors (e.g., trails, paths, creeks) to deter deer from entering areas where they are unwanted.
- Advise residents to plant native species and avoid exotic species (native plant species are more likely to have evolved to resist browsing whereas exotic species attract deer) and to cover ornamental plants with netting or mesh. Fence gardens and heavily landscaped areas.
- Advise residents to employ scare tactics such as motion detector-triggered lights/sprinklers, effigies of coyotes, and outdoor radios. Strategically placed bars of soap (and even human hair) will repel deer; pepper-based repellent sprays (on foliage) works too.
- Most importantly, enforce a strict wildlife-feeding prohibition.

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To prevent deer/vehicle accidents, we suggest installing deer fencing (10-feet high) where wildlife corridors intersect major roadways. Remove/reduce brush along roadways to increase visibility for drivers and deer. Reduce speed limits, install Deer Crossing signs, and install a reflector system (e.g., [Strieter-Lite](#)) along roadways.

More information about humane wildlife control can be found at <http://www.peta.org/issues/Wildlife/default.aspx> or contact PETA directly at [CIDinfo@peta.org](mailto:CIDinfo@peta.org).

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- <sup>ii</sup> 1997. DeNicola, A.J., and R.K. Swihart. "Capture-induced Stress in White-tailed Deer," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 25:500-503.
- <sup>iii</sup> 1996. Beringer, Jeff., Lonnie P. Hansen, William Wilding, John Fischer, and Steven L. Sheriff. "Factors Affecting Capture Myopathy in White-tailed Deer," *J. Wildl. Manag* 60(2): 373-380.
- <sup>iv</sup> 2002. Bolen, Eric G., and William L. Robinson. *Wildlife Ecology and Management (5<sup>th</sup> edition)*. Benjamin Cummins.
- <sup>v</sup> 1985. Richter, Andreas R., and Ronald F. Labisky. "Reproductive Dynamics Among Disjunct White-tailed Deer Herds in Florida," *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 49(4): 964-971.
- <sup>vi</sup> 2007. Harveson, Patricia M., Roel R. Lopez, Bret A. Collier, and Nova J. Silvy. "Impacts of Urbanization on Florida Key Deer Behavior and Population Dynamics," *Biological Conservation* 134: 321-331.