

Frequently Asked Questions

Deer Management Strategy

CRD | Planning & Protective Services

Why is population reduction an important component of a deer management strategy?

Public education, outreach, bylaw enforcement, street signage and traffic calming measures, fencing, landscape design and deer repellent utilization are all components of a successful deer management strategy. Population reduction is *only one* component of a deer management strategy. When dealing with an overabundance of deer in an area where there are no natural predators, there needs to be a mechanism to reduce the population to more manageable numbers.

What is the Regional Deer Management Strategy?

The CRD Board provided direction to move forward with a Regional Deer Management Strategy in 2011. The CRD utilized a Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) consisting of eleven members of the public, chosen from applicants by the CRD Board, to guide the development of a Regional Deer Management Strategy (RDMS). The Strategy is designed to be action based using the Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis (Hesse 2010) as a foundation to address the deer-human conflicts within the Capital Region.

In April of 2012 the CRD assembled an Expert Resources Working Group (ERWG), which included provincial wildlife biologists, the provincial wildlife vet and experts from the private sector, to advise and clarify information for the Citizens Advisory Group. In December of 2012 the CRD Board adopted the Regional Deer Management Strategy. A “terms of reference” was drafted to give the framework for both an urban and an agriculture pilot project. The Oak Bay council voted to work with the CRD initiative in June of 2013.

www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/regional-planning-pdf/Regional-Deer-Management/regional-deer-management-strategy.pdf

Why did Oak Bay agree to participate in the Pilot Program?

Like the municipalities throughout the CRD, the District of Oak Bay has, over the past several years, been hearing concerns and growing complaints from residents throughout the municipality regarding the growing population of blacktail deer in Oak Bay and the risk to public safety. We were asked to take action.

Public safety is our primary concern. In the absence of any natural predators, the deer population is on the rise, and as a consequence so are the incidents of deer-human conflict throughout our streets and neighbourhoods. 40 deer died in 2013 in Oak Bay due to human-deer conflict and these deaths were not humane – they were long and painful and most often the result of vehicle collisions, failed attempts to jump fences, and illness. We are expected to surpass these numbers in 2014.

The Provincial Government, who has the authority for wildlife management in BC, has reviewed the CRD’s Regional Deer Management Strategy and requires the Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations to issue permits authorizing population reduction. After the Strategy was released Oak Bay residents urged council to step forward and participate in the urban pilot project.

Please see the following link for more information: www.crd.bc.ca/docs/default-source/regional-planning-pdf/Regional-Deer-Management/regional-deer-management-strategy.pdf

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What does the Oak Bay Urban Pilot Project include?

- Public Education and Communication
- Deer Vehicle Collision mitigation:
 - » Signage
 - » Speed limit considerations
- Bylaws that include:
 - » Fencing (higher back and side fencing allowances for home owners)
 - » Feeding the deer is prohibited and fines have increased to \$300.00
- CRD Database design and compilation: Deer count to better understand the size of the population throughout the community
- Data Analysis: CRD Count + ICBC deer vehicle collisions + Oak Bay carcass removal + Oak Bay resident complaints
- Population reduction – if necessary
- CRD evaluation of Pilot Project
- Determination of next steps

What can residents do to help address the risks associated with deer-human conflict?

For more information, the following brochures are available at www.crd.bc.ca/deermanagement

- Deer in the Capital Region
- Reducing Deer-Human Conflict
- Ministry of Environment - Discouraging Ungulate Conflicts

Be Deer Aware:

- Use caution when in the proximity of the deer. When driving, slow down and be very aware.
- Deer are most aggressive when they have young to protect (spring and early summer) and in the fall during mating season (end of October through early December.)
- Educate your children, neighbours and friends, and prevent your pets from chasing or confronting deer.
- Do not feed the deer! A fine can be levied for feeding deer in Oak Bay.

When are deer most aggressive?

Deer are most aggressive during the spring birthing period as well as the fall/winter mating season (rut). The does' instinct to protect their fawns from a perceived threat could provoke defensive reactions. The rutting season is another sensitive time to be aware of potential conflict because the bucks are looking for females to mate with. Due to elevated testosterone levels, the bucks become very focused on the does and can become very aggressive towards pets, and in rare cases, children.

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What considerations and options were explored with the Province of BC and the CRD to address population reduction in Oak Bay?

If there is a population reduction, will other deer move into neighbourhoods to fill the void?

Wildlife experts in the provincial government have informed us that the void will not be filled right away with deer from other areas. Blacktail does do not migrate very far from where they were born. They generally don't cover more than a few square blocks. Home range in urban areas is estimated to be about 2.5 square kms. Bucks, however, will cover slightly more ground looking for females during the rut and for prime food. Deer generally will not move to a new area unless they are pushed because of predation (animal or people), dense populations and/or a lack of desirable habitat.

Capture and Relocate

This method is not currently supported by the Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations for blacktail deer in this region. The Ministry Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations stated that it will not authorize the capture and relocation of blacktail deer due to the transportation stress and resulting high mortality rate. Deer habituated to urban and suburban environments do not fare well when introduced into wild environments. www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/info/wildlife_human_interaction/UrbanUngulatesConflictAnalysisFINALJuly5-2010.pdf

Tranquilize and Relocate The Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations has stated that it will not authorize the use of tranquilizers to aid in relocation due to the high risk of the deer reacting poorly to the tranquilizer. Risks range from no reaction to the deer succumbing to the tranquilizer causing death. Deer habituated to urban and suburban environments do not fare well when introduced into wild environments. Residual tranquilizers can impact other animals that consume deer that have been tranquilized.

Immunocontraceptives

This method involves trapping a deer in a clover trap, releasing the males, marking the females and injecting them with a contraceptive. This is currently only possible and legal as part of a research project and the contraceptive application must be supervised by Provincial staff. The cost per doe is approximately \$1000.00 including the contraceptive. It is necessary to trap the deer in order to give the inoculation and manage any appropriate tagging or radio collaring for tracking. The inoculation not only sterilizes the doe, it also makes the meat unfit for human consumption. If the animal dies, scavengers that feed on the inoculated carcass could become contaminated. Approximately 70-90% of the doe population must be treated in order to start slowing population growth. Best results occur in geographically isolated populations. The contraceptives are not currently licenced or approved by Health Canada for use except when being used for experimental scientific research and by permit only. Immunocontraceptive treatment needs to be ongoing in order to be effective over the long term. Treated deer will live out the remainder of their natural life.

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The farming of blacktail deer has not been supported as a deer management option by the government of BC.

The Province has never permitted the farming of blacktail deer. This is to reduce the risk of transferring diseases between wild populations and domesticated, farmed big game animals. According to the Provincial Big Game Farm Act, the only big game animals that can be legally farmed in the province are Fallow Deer, Reindeer and Bison.

Capture and Euthanize

Under the direction of professional wildlife experts, deer are baited into modified clover traps. The wildlife experts use the trap to constrain the deer and employ a bolt gun to euthanize the deer. The deer dies quickly, and the meat, uncontaminated by tranquilizers or contraceptives, can be consumed rather than wasted. Talks are underway with First Nations to receive the deer meat along with the hides, antlers and hooves which can be used for ceremonial purposes.

This issue of managing the growing population of blacktail deer in our community is a very emotional one for all of us. We will continue to listen to our residents, work to ensure that we have the most accurate and up-to-date information available and we remain committed to act responsibly to protect the safety of our residents and the well-being of the deer.