

Oak Bay News Editorial May 2014

Safety at the heart of deer control

In the fall of 2013, Oak Bay Council agreed to participate in the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Deer Management Strategy pilot program. We did so at the urging of hundreds of residents who expressed concerns over the growing number of black tailed deer on our streets and in our neighbourhoods. Public safety is of paramount importance. In the absence of any natural predation, the deer population has increased dramatically, and as a consequence, so are the incidents of deer/human conflict on the rise. In 2012, twenty-three deer died, mostly as a result of collisions with vehicles. Some were so badly injured that they had to be put down by our police officers. In 2013, these numbers grew to 40, and already in 2014, we have had 10 deer fatalities. To put this into perspective, in May of 2013, 6 deer deaths were recorded. The trauma involved for these habituated deer, and for the people involved in these incidents, is a great concern for Council, and for Oak Bay citizens.

The responsibility for wildlife management in British Columbia rests with the provincial government, and in speaking recently with the provincial wildlife veterinarian, she confirmed that the challenges we face in Oak Bay - in municipalities throughout the Capital Region, and in communities across the province, are increasing in intensity. We ask all Oak Bay residents to actively focus on conflict reduction throughout our pilot program. If population reduction is warranted, we will be following the direction of those professionals within the provincial government who have the expertise and the authority in these matters.

The goal of the CRD Deer Management Strategy pilot program is to reduce deer/human conflict. In today's Oak Bay News you will find two CRD brochures and we ask that you review them both with your families and your neighbours. Learning to live safely and sensibly with urban deer is a responsibility that we must all share. These are wild animals – they are not pets. Over the past months, Oak Bay has strengthened municipal bylaws to discourage deer from settling in our neighbourhoods. These include increased fencing height allocations and increased fines for feeding deer. Fines of \$300.00 will now be levied for feeding deer in Oak Bay. In addition, we are continuing to support deer resistant planting choices in our park and garden areas, and we are employing the use of deer repellants to make it unpleasant for the deer to forage. Actions that discourage the settlement of deer are important components of the CRD Deer Management Strategy. Oak Bay's participation in the CRD Deer Management Strategy is outlined on our municipal website. <https://www.oakbay.ca/our-community/pets-animals/deer>

How to deal with the growing number of black tail deer in our urban communities is a complex and emotional challenge. Becoming factually informed, and taking preventative actions are important first steps. While it is clear that deer do not respect municipal boundaries and our efforts would be much more effective if we were working collaboratively as part of a regional response strategy, it is our hope that Oak Bay's willingness to step forward will create a better understanding and elevate the complex public safety issues involving human/deer conflict in urban communities. As the year unfolds, Oak Bay Council will continue to hear from residents, and we will continually re-evaluate our deer/human conflict mitigation measures. Your safety - the safety of your children, grandchildren and pets – will continue to be our first priority.

In the coming weeks, does will be giving birth to fawns – usually twins. Does are very protective of their young and can act aggressively. We ask that you be cautious when out enjoying the warmer weather and longer hours of daylight. The burgeoning population of deer in our community means there will be more deer on our roads, so please take particular care when driving.

Nils Jensen
Oak Bay Mayor