

Deer Management Frequently Asked Questions

Will fencing prevent deer from entering a yard and feeding on the landscaping and gardens?

“Because deer are large, highly mobile animals, there is little that individual property owners in developed areas can do to reduce the deer-related problems they face. Enclosing a property in a fence that deer can’t jump over can prevent landscaping damage, but it does nothing to reduce the risk of deer-vehicle collisions. Furthermore, such fences around yards have the effect of pushing the deer onto other properties, thus improving the situation for some residents at the cost of making it worse for others.”

Source:

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/commdeermgmtguide.pdf

In addition, deer fencing, to be effective needs, to be at least 8 feet high. City regulations limit fencing to 6 feet. The cost of fencing to enclose a yard, even if the city regulations were amended, would be prohibitive to most property owners.

Can the deer population be managed by reducing the birth rate with fertility methods?

“**Surgical sterilization** is the most reliable way to render a deer infertile, and for does it can be accomplished by either ovariectomy or tubal ligation. The latter technique doesn’t prevent ovulation, so sterilized does will still go into estrus and mate. Because they won’t get pregnant, however, they will go through several estrous cycles each year, creating an extended rutting

season. This could have a number of negative consequences, including more DVCs, increased stress and lower overwinter survival, and an increase in the local population due to bucks being attracted from neighboring areas (Boulanger et al., 2014). An ovariectomy program is not likely to have these consequences.”

“Immuno-contraception is the other fertility control method that is often suggested by those seeking alternatives to lethal population reduction.”

“Unlike surgical sterilization, immuno-contraception is neither effective on all treated animals nor a permanent treatment; does must be re-treated on a regular basis to maintain infertility. Contraceptive treatment can only be performed under a research permit in New York, because there are no contraceptive agents for deer commercially registered with the state and continued development is needed before they can be effective management tools.”

“All fertility control methods are extremely labor-intensive and expensive, because deer must be captured for treatment and virtually all does must be treated to prevent population growth. Capture, anesthesia and surgery also create stress and may result in injury or death of treated deer.”

Source:

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/commdeermgmtguide.pdf#page21

White Buffalo Inc. is the leading expert in population control of white-tailed deer and was contracted in Staten Island. The program was discontinued due to high costs.

“Fertility control is widely perceived to be the ideal solution. However, agents are currently not widely available for managing overabundant deer populations. These agents remain strictly regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, and further research is required to assess the feasibility and practicality of using contraceptives. Fertility control agents do exist that can prevent reproduction in individual deer. However, the need for repeated administration and limited delivery technologies significantly restrict the

population size that can be experimentally manipulated. Data collected to date shows costs ranging from ~\$500 - \$1,500 per doe treated and includes the cost of manpower and materials. Likely the use of contraceptive agents will be limited to small, insular herds.”

Source:

<https://www.whitebuffaloinc.org/deer-management>

Why is the current population of deer a concern?

Just as livestock can overgraze a range and reduce it to a barren wasteland, deer can over-browse a forest. Because mature canopy trees aren't affected, deer impacts on a forest may not be immediately evident, but they are profound and long-lasting. Browsing by deer at high densities reduces diversity in the forest understory enables invasive species to out-compete natives and prevents seedlings of many species from growing into the next generation of trees ultimately leading to fewer mature trees.

The ecological changes brought about by deer also cascade through forest plant communities into wildlife communities, reducing the abundance and diversity of songbird species that use the intermediate levels of a forest Ecosystem impacts may be magnified in urban and suburban parks and natural areas, which provide important habitat for migrating birds and other wildlife but are often subjected to the highest deer densities.

High-density populations can also harm the deer themselves by increasing competition for food and transmission of diseases and parasites. Deer in lower-density populations tend to be in better physical condition because there is more food available to them. Because they don't come in contact with as many other deer, they are less likely to be infected with parasites or diseases.

Source:

https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/commdeermgmtguide.pdf#page21
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Additional information on the impact of deer overabundance:

Oh Deer! How Deer Shape Forests in the Catskills & Beyond. Webinar that explains the impact deer population has on forests with suggestions on how to restore both a healthy deer population and healthy diverse forests.

<https://www.caryinstitute.org/news-insights/lecture-video/oh-deer-how-deer-shape-forests-catskills-beyond>