



Deer Control in Urban Areas

As natural habitats are stripped away, wildlife such as deer can thrive in urban areas if steady food sources are available. Municipalities seeking to reduce deer numbers can do so effectively and humanely by implementing an integrated, adaptive approach.

Ineffective methods of deer control attempted by local governments include bowhunting, which is also among the cruelest strategies. Bowhunters often spend hours tracking the blood trails of animals before finding them. Many aren't ever found, and their deaths are slow and painful.^{1,2,3,4} It can take *weeks* for some to succumb to their injuries.

Trapping and trucking deer is also inhumane because it causes animals to suffer immensely.⁵ If they're relocated, those who survive commonly have trouble finding adequate sources of food, water, and shelter and may be mauled by predators or die slowly of disease or parasites.⁶ **Even the use of sharpshooters would be less cruel than these methods.**

Regardless, lethal methods never succeed in controlling deer populations in the long run and will actually backfire. When animals are removed from an area or killed, a spike in the food supply can result.⁷ Consequently, survivors and newcomers breed at an accelerated rate and populations actually *increase*.⁸ Furthermore, when adults are removed, families are torn apart and vulnerable young are left to starve. The outcome is a pointless, never-ending, expensive killing cycle.

By contrast, effective deer-control plans focus on containing food sources in residential areas⁹ and on habitat modification in riparian and wildlife corridors. We suggest that officials take the following action:

- Reduce food sources, especially in restoration and riparian areas, by wrapping saplings shorter than 4 feet in corrugated plastic tubes or sleeves, deer netting, or mesh
- Trim back low-hanging tree branches, and keep grasses and weeds cut short
- Install deer fencing *strategically* along wildlife corridors (e.g., trails, paths, and creeks) to deter deer from entering areas where they're unwanted

- Fence in gardens and heavily landscaped areas
- Enforce a strict wildlife-feeding prohibition
- Advise residents to do the following: (1) plant native species and avoid exotic plants, which attract deer, and cover any ornamental plants with netting or mesh; (2) employ scare tactics such as motion detector-triggered lights or sprinklers, models of coyotes, and outdoor radios; (3) strategically place bars of soap (and even human hair) to deter deer; and (4) spray pepper-based repellent on foliage

To prevent collisions between deer and vehicles, we suggest installing 10-foot-high deer fencing where wildlife corridors intersect major roadways. Along roadways, remove or reduce brush to increase visibility for drivers and deer, reduce speed limits, erect “deer crossing” signs, and install a reflector system (e.g., Strieter-Lite).

Find out more about humane wildlife control at [PETA.org/Issues/Wildlife](https://peta.org/issues/wildlife) or by contacting PETA at CIDinfo@peta.org.

Notes

¹Pedersen MA, Berry SM, Bossart JC. 2002. Wounding rates of white-tailed deer with modern archery equipment. *Proc Annu Conf Southeast Assoc Fish and Wildl Agencies*. 62:31-34.

²Ditchkoff SS, Welch ER, Lochmiller RL, Masters RE, Starry WR, Dinkines WC. 1998. Wounding rates of white-tailed deer with traditional archery equipment. *Proc Annu Conf Southeast Assoc Fish and Wildl Agencies*. 52:244-248.

³Boydston GA, Gore HG. 1987. Archery wounding loss in Texas. Austin (Texas): Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

⁴Gladfelter HL, Kienzler JM, Koehler KJ. 1983. Effects of compound bow use on hunter success and crippling rates in Iowa. *Wildl Soc Bull*. 11(1):7-12.

⁵DeNicola AJ, Swihart RK. 1997. Capture-induced stress in white-tailed deer. *Wildl Soc Bull*. 25(2):500-503.

⁶Beringer J, Hansen LP, Wilding W, Fischer J, Sheriff SL. 1996. Factors affecting capture myopathy in white-tailed deer. *J Wildl Manag*. 60(2):373-380.

⁷Bolen EG, Robinson WL. 2003. Wildlife ecology and management. 5th edition. Prentice Hall.

⁸Richter AR, Labisky RF. 1985. Reproductive dynamics among disjunct white-tailed deer herds in Florida. *J Wildl Manag*. 49(4):964-971.

⁹Harveson PM, Lopez RR, Collier BA, Silvy NJ. 2007. Impacts of urbanization on Florida Key deer behavior and population dynamics. *Biol Conserv*. 134(3):321-331.



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