

Do not feed wildlife



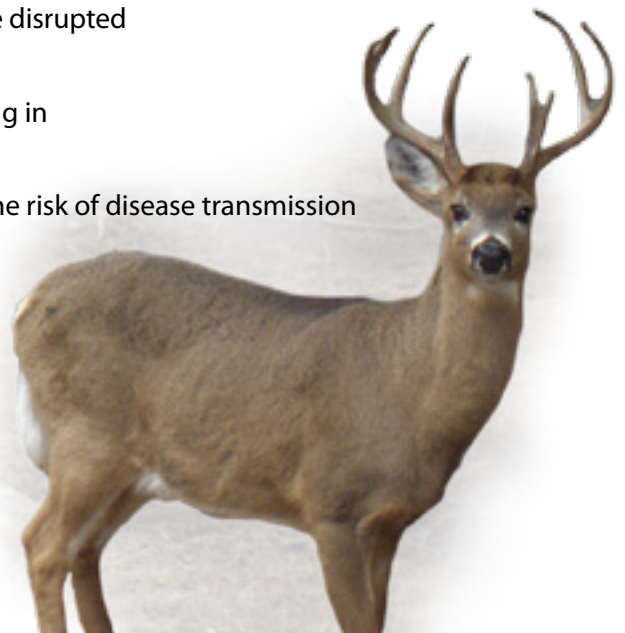
Like many other provincial and state agencies, Natural Resources does not encourage the feeding of wildlife. This practice almost always carries with it negative consequences for the wildlife involved. These include increased disease transmission and increased mortality due to vehicle collisions. There are also a number of safety and social concerns for the public, such as the potential increase in vehicle collisions, as well as damage to property and nuisance problems.

Although people who feed wildlife do so with the best of intentions and feel they are looking after the welfare of the wild animals, they should be aware that wildlife should remain wild. Wildlife should derive their food and shelter from natural habitats and under natural conditions. This will help maintain natural adaptations that ensure the long-term survival of the animals themselves, and of the species. The general rule is: "Do not feed wildlife."

Feeding deer

People are often tempted to feed white-tailed deer during winter in order to "save" them from winter conditions. This practice causes a particular set of problems. Research has shown that there is actually little or no benefit from feeding deer during winter. In fact, there are a number of negative consequences. Here is why you shouldn't feed deer:

- Artificial feeding may not actually improve winter survival.
- Deer visiting feeding areas lose their natural wildness and aversion to people.
- Feeding manufactured food products removes their natural adaptations to cope with severe winters in their natural habitat.
- Natural migration patterns to their wintering areas may be disrupted if the animals are enticed to remain at a feeding area.
- Deer become concentrated around feeding areas, resulting in destruction of natural habitat.
- Concentrations of deer at feeding stations also increase the risk of disease transmission among the animals.
- The digestive system of deer adapts to the typical natural food (woody browse) that is available during winter. Improper feeding of other food types can cause digestive problems that may result in death.
- Deer that become accustomed to feeders and are then not fed proper quantities or quality of food will also die.



- A few dominant deer at a feeding area typically receive most of the food. As a result, any benefit to the local population is much smaller than it would appear to be if simply based on the number of animals in the area.
- Many deer feeding areas are established near populated areas and homes, increasing the risk of dogs chasing and killing deer.
- Location of feeding areas near populated areas or highways also greatly increases the risk of deer/vehicle collisions.
- Increasing the over-wintering population of deer in urban/suburban areas increases the likelihood of disease transmission to humans, such as from tick-borne diseases like Lyme disease.
- Deer concentrated at feeding areas near homes inevitably causes a nuisance problem for neighbours, as deer browse and damage nearby shrubs and gardens.
- When conducted in a way that minimizes the negative impacts and increases the benefit, winter deer feeding is very expensive (\$60 / deer).

Deer have adaptations to survive winters in New Brunswick, and even though not all deer survive, there is no ecological benefit from artificial feeding. In fact, improper feeding causes many problems. There are a number of deer deaths in the province every year that result from well-intentioned but improper feeding activities. In general, the negative costs of feeding deer outweigh the positive benefits.

