

URBAN NUISANCE DEER CONTROL IN NEW BRUNSWICK

2020 FACT SHEET

Some New Brunswick communities have more White-tailed deer in their neighborhoods than they prefer. Deer seem to have changed their behavior and are now living within our towns more so than in the past. Several factors may have caused this change, but in general, urban deer have better survival than “backwoods” deer. People placing feed near their homes have attracted deer into communities and have encouraged deer to become residential. Deer populations in some communities have grown and become a nuisance to many people, who complain of damage to gardens and vegetation, concern of disease, and deer-vehicle collisions. Some communities wish to have fewer deer and have requested Natural Resources and Energy Development (DNRED) to control nuisance deer numbers.

Deer (and most wildlife) are present in communities primarily because of abundant food supplies. Reducing food availability will often encourage animals to go elsewhere for food. Deliberate feeding of deer should be stopped and gardens could be protected by fencing. These steps may not cause deer to leave neighborhoods immediately but should reduce deer numbers over time.

As deer have become an urban nuisance animal across North America, a variety of techniques have been tried by communities to reduce urban deer numbers. Short term reduction of local deer densities usually requires the removal of animals, either non-lethally or lethally. Some agencies and universities have reviewed these experiences and have documented the results. A current and highly regarded document from the *Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies*, titled “**Methods for Managing Human-Deer Conflicts**” (2019) <https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-informs/research>, provides a summary of various techniques to control nuisance urban deer populations, and is one source of the following paragraphs.

Translocation – Capture and movement of deer from towns to other locations is appealing to the public and is often requested, however most wildlife agencies do not use this technique. Trapping or tranquilizing and relocating deer to other locations has been shown to result in high mortality rates after release. Deer die from stress associated with capture and movement, and from being introduced into unfamiliar wilderness environments often with higher predation and more severe climate. The financial and effort costs associated with deer relocation are very high. Relocation efforts must be repeated every few years to control immigrated deer and the offspring from deer that had eluded capture. The movement of deer to other locations may also spread disease.

Fertility Control –The US National Parks Service has conducted research on alternative techniques for non-lethal control of nuisance deer. Their efforts have not yet found a contraceptive method that can effectively and efficiently control growth in deer populations. There are currently no drugs legally available for deer contraception except under special research permits. Work continues to formulate a new drug that is humane and effective and treated animals will be safe for human consumption.

Fences and Repellants - Fences have proven to be very effective in excluding deer from properties, and relatively inexpensive fencing options are now commercially available. High strength black nylon fencing is now commonly seen protecting vegetation on properties in New Brunswick. Various deer repellants are available that can be effective, but most offer only short-term protection. These techniques are relatively easy to use and landowners are encouraged to consider them.

Sharp Shooting – The use of specialized sharp shooters to kill deer has proven to be very quick and effective in reducing deer densities within towns, mainly in the United States. Communities often pay private contractors to remove deer at a high premium. This technique has not been generally accepted in Canada, receiving widespread public resistance in communities where the idea has been proposed. The United States allows specialized firearm modifications such as sound-suppression and night vision optics that assist in shooting urban deer, but this technology is not allowed to be used by Canadian civilian agencies. This option is currently not considered for New Brunswick.

Regulated Hunting – Regulated hunting is the primary option used by most wildlife agencies to control nuisance urban deer. Using hunters to remove extra deer from local areas is attractive because of low operational expenses to wildlife agencies and the end use of the wildlife resource by the hunters' families. Normal hunting regulations often need to be modified to permit the removal of deer from residential communities. New Brunswick has chosen to implement the **Nuisance Deer Management Assistance Programs (NDMAP)** in communities that have majority public support to reduce local deer numbers. NDMAP gives hunters with special permits the opportunity to harvest extra antlerless (female) deer from approved private lands during the regular deer hunting season. Please refer to the NDMAP Fact Sheet on the DNRED website for further information.

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/nr-rn/pdf/en/Wildlife/KVNuisanceDeerPermitFactSheet.pdf>

Summary

Controlling urban deer is very difficult and does not have an easy solution. Towns in New Brunswick experiencing nuisance deer issues are not unique and can benefit from the experience of other communities with similar issues. Non-lethal control options such as relocation or birth control may be desired by many, however these techniques have proven to be costly and ineffective to date and are not currently being considered in New Brunswick.

Individuals are encouraged to not feed deer and to protect gardens and sensitive vegetation with fencing. Communities are encouraged to introduce bylaws prohibiting feeding of deer to make their area less enticing to deer. As well, attractive food sources such as wild apples could be removed from town properties.

New Brunswick intends to continue with the current approach of using hunters to reduce urban deer numbers in specific towns through the NDMAP program, as this is the most commonly used method in North America. New Brunswick will continue to monitor current research in North America on control techniques for urban deer and will may consider new techniques in the future.