White-tailed Deer Management in Urban/Suburban Environments: Planning for Success

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Introduction

- WTD were once considered to be threatened in Texas due to unregulated market hunting and extensive habitat modifications
- Have rapidly increased especially in the last several decades
- WTD are very adaptable species

Recent Causes for Population Increase

- Expanding human populations increasing urban area
- Lack of predators
- Increased protection

Nuisance Deer Issues

- Vehicle damage
- Property (landscape) damage
- Declining herd health
- Disease transmission
- Human injury/mortality

Can it be Fixed?

Yes, but …

- No quick fix
- No cheap fix
- Public acceptance of management practices take time
- The problem will not go away
- The longer you wait, the more expensive it will be

Obstacles to Population Control

- Aesthetics (animal watching)
- Safety & liability concerns
- Conflicting social attitudes & perceptions
- Hunting/firearm restrictions
- Public relations concerns

Steps for Success

1. Define the problem
2. Identify the goals
3. Build Consensus towards a solution
4. Implementation

Defining the Problem

- Eating landscaping
- Vehicle collisions
- Human/Deer interaction
- Disease

Identifying Goals

- Reduce Population
- Reduce Vehicle Collisions
- Reduce Property Damage
- Maintain Healthy Deer

Building Consensus

- Residents
- Local Government Officials
- POA’s
- Media
- Local Organizations
- Form a Wildlife Committee
- Consensus is what makes or breaks a management strategy

What can be Controlled?

- Births (decrease)
- Deaths (increase)
- Ingress (decrease)
- Egress (increase)

Controlling Birth Rate

- Contraception
  - Best Case - Stabilize the Population
  - Population declines only in the long term
- Can be effective for population stabilization
  - Closed population
  - Small population
- Potential for use to keep populations down

Controlling Ingress

- Questions to be asked:
  - How large an area are you dealing with?
  - Population density on adjacent property?
  - What are your goals?
  - How much is deer removal costing you?
- Methods
  - Fencing
  - Feeding Bans (limited success)

Increasing Egress

- Trapping and Relocation
- Problems with Relocation
  - Availability of Release Sites
  - Effectiveness
  - Cost
  - Mortality

Increasing Mortality

- Hunting
  - Archery
  - Firearms
- Lethal Control
  - Trap, Transport, & Process Permit (TTP)
  - Meat cannot be wasted

Permits for Managing Deer Populations

There are 6 different types of permits:

1. Managed Lands Deer Permit (MLDP)
2. Antler-less/Spike Deer Control Permit (ADCP)
3. Depredation Permit
4. Trap, Transport, and Transplant Permit (TTT)
5. Urban TTT
6. Trap, Transport and Process Permit (TTP)

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When are you Done?

- Never
- Regardless of your goals, deer population will need maintenance efforts
- The lower you go, the less the maintenance
- Without a fence, maintenance will be much higher

How Many Deer do you Leave?

- Sociological implications
  - People want to see deer
  - People don’t want deer damage
- Cost implications
  - Initial costs are higher
  - Maintenance costs
- Habitat implications
  - Carrying capacity

Sociological Realities

- Constituents
  - Must gain consensus
  - Educate, educate, educate
- Media
  - Make sure the FACTS are known
  - Designate media contacts
- Expect resistance

Implementation

- Develop baseline measurements
- Keep good records
- Success of any management practice can not be determined in a single application

The FACTS of Control

- The deer population is out of control
- Contraception alone won’t reduce the population
- Hunting alone probably won’t achieve goals
- Trapping is a long-term expensive prospect
- Lethal control will always be part of the solution
- The meat will not be wasted
- The remaining deer will be healthy
- The habitat/landscape will rebound

Summary

- Doing nothing will only make the situation worse
- There are no silver bullets
- Deer must be managed
  - Consequence of living in deer habitat
  - Long-term planning is required
  - Maintenance must be planned and budgeted forever

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