

MEMORANDUM

TO: Roger L. Stancil, Town Manager

FROM: Brian J. Curran, Chief of Police
Kevin Gunter, Lieutenant

SUBJECT: Deer Population

DATE: October 12, 2009

PURPOSE

On March 18, 2009 a petition was brought before the Chapel Hill Town Council regarding the town's deer population and possible measures for controlling herd populations. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information that addresses concerns brought forward regarding the deer population within Chapel Hill.

BACKGROUND

The problem of increasing deer population is occurring in many areas of the country. Deer in an urban area are generally considered a nuisance when they are eating gardens or expensive landscaping plants. Deer have also been associated with automobile accidents, property damage and personal injury to drivers. The N.C. Wildlife Resource Commission recommends the use of regulated and controlled hunts to effectively and efficiently reduce and maintain deer populations in balance with cultural and habitat carrying capacities.

DISCUSSION

An Urban Archery Season was initiated 2 years ago as a potential solution to the deer nuisance problem. Created and managed by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, the program is offered to municipalities as another option for addressing an overabundance of deer. Cities and towns are required to submit a letter of intent to participate to the Wildlife Resources Commission by April 1 of each year. Each municipality can establish its own guidelines and administer the hunt as it deems appropriate. The 2010 season begins January 9 and runs through February 13. To date, 16 municipalities have adopted the season, the nearest being Pittsboro. In 2008, 83 deer were killed during the special urban hunts and the majority of the deer were killed in Elkin in northwestern N.C.

Concerns about urban deer hunting have been raised by town officials and others considering the implementation of such a program. Those include the costs of managing the program, enforcement, and safety of residents located in the specified areas. All of the municipalities currently participating in the program have considerably less population within their town limits than Chapel Hill. One municipality reported having multiple complaints from property owners concerning unauthorized people trespassing and hunting outside specified areas. Following up on

these types of complaints could quickly deplete current police resources. Enforcement of this program is the sole responsibility of the local jurisdiction.

Additional concerns have been expressed over the number of deer vehicle accidents reported annually. The following illustrates vehicular deer accidents and the reduction in reported accidents from 2007 to the present in Chapel Hill.

- In 2007, there were a total of 53 deer vehicle accidents reported.
- In 2008, there were a total of 43 deer vehicle accidents reported.
- To date in 2009, there have been a total of 19 deer vehicle accidents reported.

In addition to urban hunting programs, questions have been raised concerning deer contraceptive or sterilization measures. According to George Strader, District Biologist with the N.C. Wildlife commission, these measures are strictly in the experimental stages and have not been approved for use in North Carolina.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council take no action.

The Police Department will continue to monitor vehicle deer accident data and design a public awareness campaign for motorists. This campaign would be made available on the Town's website and in addition, would recommend tips on how residents can keep deer out of their yards.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Deer Population Petition (p. 3).