

Non-Lethal Deer Management Meeting

Date: July 12, 2016

Location: Michigan State University

In Attendance:

Derek Delacourt,	City of Ann Arbor
Bob McGee	A2 Residents for Non-Lethal Deer Management
Lisa Abrams	FAAWN
Dr. Bret Rudolph	MDNR
Dr. William Porter	MSU

Meeting Purpose

The intent of the meeting was to meet with the MDNR and MSU about a possible research project involving non-lethal deer management techniques in the City of Ann Arbor, specifically chemical contraception or infield ovariectomy.

Meeting Summary

MSU Research Project:

The meeting began with extensive conversation regarding what a possible research partnership with MSU would entail. Dr. Porter was very straightforward that any research project must first have the measures of success established by the community. It was clear that reducing deer only did not constitute a research project. That the reduction in deer to achieve a sought after outcome would need to be defined, (i.e. reduction in vegetative damage by X %, reduction in deer car collisions). Dr. Porter was clear that for MSU to be involved the community must “determine what it looks like to be successful”.

Dr. Porter described the situation as a “wicked problem”, one he has run into in several communities. The lack of a clear question and no clear measure of success create a lack of trust in the local municipality and the MDNR. This is a very common occurrence in communities he’s worked with.

It was the consensus of the participants that the total number of deer or how many deer there are in the community is generally not the real issue but the total number that achieves the community’s vision of success that matters. The community must define that vision.

The cost of a university research project was discussed. An individual graduate student located in Lansing to do research is approximately 35k per year that would not include any field time. A field person would escalate that cost to 50k – 100k. A multi-year research project may be cost prohibitive and difficult to design and implement this year.

An MSU birth control project would have an approximately 5 – 10 year span

MDNR Permit:

It is not illegal to issue a permit to chemically sterilize or perform an ovariectomy on deer in the State of Michigan. However, the MDNR does not allow either method and will not issue a permit unless accompanied by an accepted research proposal. The MDNR will consider a permit from A2 to perform surgical sterilization of deer or administer Porcine Zona Pallucida (PZP), an immunocontraceptive vaccine, if it is presented as a research proposal. That proposal may be narrower in scope than projects considered by MSU. The possibility of the City partnering with an entity other than a University to submit the permit and was deemed acceptable, if the MDNR agreed with the scope of the proposal.

The MDNR was clear that a permit to conduct surgical sterilization or administer PZP would not be approved without a research proposal. The MDNR permit would be issued annually.

Surgical Sterilization/Immunocontraception:

The use of PZP can only be conducted in partnership with the US Humane Society. They are currently the only agency authorized to make the drug available. Deer must be treated twice for the contraception to be effective, the initial dose plus a booster 6 months later. Contraception is 80% effective. The darting of the deer must be done at a close range, 40 - 50 yards.

This process provides long-term reduction in the deer herd and is often used to stabilize herd numbers. Culling obviously provides instantaneous reduction in herd size.

CULLING and DARTING:

It was noted by Drs. Rudolph and Porter that it will be more difficult to approach deer after culling or darting programs begin. This is due to the fact that deer that escape culling or have been darted will learn to become leery of humans and will not be as approachable. This will increase future costs and efforts to implement either program.