



Deer Management

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

(Last Updated 1/08/19)

1. What does the 2019 City of Ann Arbor Deer Management Program include?

The 2019 deer management plan has three primary components, including:

Educational Program

City staff created a comprehensive list of non-lethal deer management techniques that allow citizens to reduce deer impacts on their property. We have listed a variety of exclusionary methods, repellents and deterrents that are allowed within the City of Ann Arbor and have scientifically shown some efficacy. Residents who want to reduce deer impacts on their property should review and consider implementing these various strategies via the [non-lethal deer deterrent webpage](#).

Sterilization (Non-Lethal) Program

Pneumatically darting female deer in three neighborhoods, temporarily removing the deer for surgical sterilization, and returning females back to their original area. From Nov. 28-30 between 3 p.m. – 5 a.m., two zones in Wards 1 and 2 had a total of 6 females sterilized via an ovariectomy.

Based on White Buffalo's request, sterilization efforts were moved forward and conducted November 25 – 28, 2018. The approved research permit from the MDNR limited the City to be able to sterilize a maximum of 80 female deer to date. That left eight allowable females that could be sterilized this year. Six female deer were located and sterilized between Nov. 25 and 28. To date, 78 female deer have been sterilized under the MDNR special research permit. Operations were limited to the northern and southern sterilization zones. Success within the areas is achieved by the capture and sterilization of > 95% of female deer within identified zones. White Buffalo will assess the level of success in their final report. No public parks were closed for female deer sterilization activities. Selected public lands were utilized for darting, but public access was not affected. No University lands were utilized for sterilization activities.

Lethal Program

From Jan. 2-27, sharpshooting activities may occur on privately owned parcels, subject to the owner's prior written consent and in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Residents can continue with their normal daily routines since all deer management activities will occur on private property. Unauthorized trespassing is not permitted and will be subject to enforcement action.

January 2- 27, select University of Michigan and Concordia University properties will be closed every day from 3 p.m. to midnight for sharpshooting activities to occur. Please refer to the closure map available on the Deer Management Website www.a2gov.org/deermanagement.

From Jan. 2-27, sharpshooting of deer may occur in the following city parks and nature areas. These city parks in Wards 1 and 2 will be closed every day for all activities from 3 p.m. until midnight. The city will mail park-closure postcards to residents adjacent to impacted areas.

1. Barton Nature Area [only the Foster area north of Warrington Dr.]
2. Bird Hills Nature Area
3. Cedar Bend/Island Park
4. Foxfire West Nature Area
5. Huron Parkway/Braun Nature Areas
6. Leslie Park Golf Course
7. Leslie Woods Nature Area
8. Narrow Gauge Way Nature Area
9. Oakwoods Nature Area
10. South Pond Nature Area [Only the area near NAP office at 3875 E. Huron River Dr.]
11. The UM Arboretum will be closed January 7, 14 and 17 only from 3 p.m.-midnight.

Residents should be aware that interfering with the operations of the city's deer management implementation plan (e.g. tampering with bait piles) is against the law. Also, baiting deer onto private property within the city is against the law, unless performed by the city's contractor.

2. What are the objectives of the program?

Educational Program & Public Right-of-Way Improvements:

- Identify potential areas of additional deer signage and implement installation.
- Develop and publish an expanded deer education component to the City's deer management website, including a deer-resistant gardening campaign.
- Continuing to update the City's interactive information/mapping tool.
- Continue to expand the City's on-going education program.

Sterilization (Nonlethal) Program:

- Obtain an amended permit from MDNR for a deer sterilization program.
- Sterilize at least 95 - 98% of the female deer in the original research areas #1, #2, #3 and a potential #4.
- Mortality rate associated with sterilization less than 2%.
- Investigate with University of Michigan if there are appropriate locations for sterilization.
- Obtain a written update from White Buffalo on the scientific results to-date on the sterilization efforts.

Lethal Program:

- Number of firearm related injuries associated with cull activities is 0.

- Remove up to 150 deer, depending on available locations, weather and contractor recommendation.
- Level of public park closures are acceptable to at least 75% of surveyed residents.
- Coordinate with University of Michigan to increase the number of available locations for the deer management program.

3. If someone doesn't agree with all or parts of the 2019 Deer Management Implementation Plan, how can his or her views be expressed?

- Ensure you're informed:
 - Read most up-to-date FAQs to understand all aspects of the plan.
 - Submit clarifying questions to deer management [email](#) or call the hotline, 734.794.6295.
- A professionally developed survey will be conducted with a random sample of residents this spring (2019). If you receive an invitation to participate, please complete the survey.
- Contact your councilmember.
- Attend a Council meeting (public comments spots are available at the beginning and end of each meeting).

4. Can residents feed deer?

No, since January 2016 the city has had a deer feeding ban ordinance. Baiting deer onto private property within the city is against the law, unless performed by the city's contractor. In addition, interfering with the operations of the city's Deer Management Implementation Plan (e.g., tampering with bait piles) also is against the law. Under an [Ann Arbor deer feeding prohibition ordinance](#) and a [Michigan Department of Natural Resources baiting and feeding ban](#), it is illegal to put out any substance composed of grains, minerals, salt, fruit, vegetables, hay or any other food material, whether natural or manufactured, which may lure, entice or attract deer. Removing bird feeders entirely is the only way to guarantee they will not act as bait for deer, however such drastic action is not required with the right planning. With a little care and effort, you can significantly reduce the likelihood that your feeders will attract deer and still enjoy legally feeding birds or squirrels. For more bird feeding tips, read the [Bait Ban and Bird Feeding Flyer](#).

5. How did the city select White Buffalo to work with?

After completion of the 2016 deer management plan, the city worked with some self-organized citizen groups to obtain feedback. These groups initially brought White Buffalo Inc. to city staff's attention. Staff reviewed White Buffalo's experience and found the Michigan Department of Natural Resources believed the organization to be a credible research organization. City staff solicited a proposal from White Buffalo for the 2017 program and determined there weren't any other non-profit organizations that provided the level of research expertise of White Buffalo. The city contracted with White Buffalo to implement the city's 2017, 2018 and 2019 Deer Management Plans, including sterilization and nonlethal deer removal. Under the terms of White Buffalo's contract with the city, White Buffalo applied for and received the necessary permit from the MDNR.

Sterilization Program

6. **Where did sterilization occur?**

From Nov. 28-30, two zones in Wards 1 and 2 had 6 female deer sterilized by White Buffalo via an ovariectomy. This work was conducted via a special research permit issued by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to White Buffalo.

7. **What was the sterilization process?**

White Buffalo Inc., wildlife professionals, located female deer and darted them with tranquilizer darts equipped with tracking devices. This was done from marked, stationary vehicles on public roadways and at bait stations at designated sites within program areas between 3 p.m. and 5 a.m. Female deer were darted by highly experienced personnel who are specially trained to dart deer in an urban setting with precision and accuracy. Unlike firearms, pneumatic darting guns have very limited range (30-40 feet).

Once darted, the female deer were tracked until they were unconscious (typically just a few minutes), and then transported to a temporary surgical site where a veterinarian performed ovariectomies and administered long-acting antibiotics and pain relievers. The entire process, from initial darting to release, took approximately one hour per female.

All sterilized female deer were fitted with numbered ear tags, and one mature female in each group was radio-collared to facilitate future program efforts, track migration rates and patterns and assess survival rates. Data regarding size, age and condition were collected. Treated deer were then returned to a safe location close to the area where they were found and monitored until they recovered from anesthesia.

8. **Why did the city implement sterilization as a deer management method?**

The Ann Arbor community is comprised of individuals with a variety of perspectives and values about deer. As a result of working with resident stakeholder groups, sterilization was identified as an appropriate deer reduction method for the city to implement, which was done via a special research permit issued by the MDNR.

Lethal Program

9. **What is a cull?**

Culling refers to the act of killing wildlife by firearm or bow. Per the MDNR research permit, deer culls will be conducted in Ann Arbor in designated parks, nature areas and on city-selected private property using firearms. The city's contractor will not be utilizing a bow.

10. **Where and when will culls be conducted?**

The MDNR permit allows White Buffalo sharpshooters to lethally remove up to 150 deer in designated City of Ann Arbor parks and nature areas in Wards 1 and 2. Sharpshooting will not occur from a moving vehicle, but may occur from a parked vehicle.

January 2- 27, select University of Michigan and Concordia University properties will be closed every day from 3 p.m. to midnight for sharpshooting activities to occur. Please refer to

the closure map available on the Deer Management Website
www.a2gov.org/deermanagement.

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11. When will the city stop culling deer?

Once a community begins deer management activities to address deer browse damage, it requires some level of actions to continue unless the tolerance of the community changes. The city monitors citizens' deer browse tolerance via an annual survey conducted by the Michigan State University Research Center.

In addition to education, culling is the preferred method recommended by the MDNR for effectively managing deer. The MDNR has the legal authority to manage deer in the state of Michigan. It is illegal to relocate deer. The city, based on input from its residents, is also pursuing an alternative deer management method in locations where culling is infeasible. The mixture of these three methods in Ann Arbor going forward may change. The MDNR does not permit sterilization without an approved research permit.

Because deer don't have natural predators in urban environments and they reproduce at a rate that rapidly increases their population, it is necessary to remove 30 to 40 percent of the deer population annually in order to maintain a stable population size. The sooner a large population of deer is brought to an acceptable level, the fewer deer that will have to be removed annually and cumulatively. The city's future deer management efforts include deciding which method is appropriate for maintaining an acceptable level of deer impacts in the community.

12. What will happen to the venison?

Per the MDNR permit requirements, the deer is processed and the venison must be donated to a local food bank.

Due to concerns that City staff and citizens had in regards to the potential of PFAS/PFOS contaminants within deer culled through the City's deer management program, the city pursued a line of inquiry with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to identify the risk of PFAS/PFOS contaminants within culled deer and to determine if testing samples from these deer was necessary.

City staff met with individuals from the MDNR including Senior Water Policy Advisor, Research and Management Supervisor, Wildlife Biologist of Wildlife Division and Legislative and Regulatory Specialist of Wildlife Division staff and the MDHHS Environmental Toxicologist and Specialist on PFOS/PFAS testing in deer to discuss and investigate these concerns.

The MDNR and MDHHS staff stated that all the evidence they have compiled from the two studies they conducted across the state, including data from Washtenaw, Oakland and Livingston counties, suggests that the deer found within Ann Arbor are safe to eat.

This conclusion is based on the information these agencies now have in relation to PFAS/PFOS concentration in surface waters across the state and in the Huron River, deer biology and habit in urban and suburban areas, and testing of muscle tissue of sampled deer from within and around Washtenaw county. The highest concentration of PFOS/PFAS in water samples for the Huron River watershed (including all creeks and drainages) is found in Norton Creek, which is approximately 13 miles from Ann Arbor. MDNR staff noted that the likelihood of deer covering that distance is highly unlikely. The samples from the deer muscle tissues taken from Washtenaw, Oakland and Livingston counties yielded "non-detectable" results of PFOS/PFAS, using MDHHS protocols and techniques that can detect down to 0.1 parts per billion.

The MDNR and MDHHS stated that there is no consumption advisory for deer in the Ann Arbor area given their current analyses. They will continue to collect data in surface waters in areas of high PFAS/PFOS concentration to monitor this concern. The MDNR does not believe that Ann Arbor is an area of high PFAS/PFOS concentration, but will keep City staff informed of their findings around other parts of the Huron River watershed.

13. What happens if someone disregards a park's closure?

Violations of park rules are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In the case of deer management activities, safety is a top priority, and Ann Arbor Police will respond accordingly to individuals who violate park closures. Designated parks and nature areas are closed for all purposes every day from 3 p.m. to midnight Jan. 2-27, 2019.

14. How will safety be ensured during cull activities?

The below processes and information help to underline safety protocols that have been put in place to ensure citizen safety during cull activities:

- The city's contract for professional sharpshooters is based on the contractor being paid for time and materials. The contractor's compensation is not dependent on the number of deer culled. White Buffalo Inc. is a non-profit organization.
- The safety protocols of the contractor have been reviewed by AAPD personnel.
- Designated city parks and nature areas will be closed daily from 3 p.m. until midnight.
- The City will communicate park and nature area closures via a variety of channels, including the city's website, email notification, postcards and social media.
- UM Nichols Arboretum will be closed on Jan. 7, 14 and 17.
- Select University of Michigan and Concordia properties will be closed from 3 p.m. until midnight January 2-27.
- Signage warning of sharpshooters and closures will be posted along entrances and other notable locations around all designated City Parks and University sites at least 24 hours in advance of the three-week closure timeframe. Snow fencing may be used to supplement signage at select locations.
- Only personnel authorized by the City of Ann Arbor or University of Michigan are permitted in the parks and on UM property during closures.
- A city security contractor, in communication and coordination with White Buffalo, will perform a roving patrol of closed public areas when sharpshooting activities are occurring.
- City Police staff will coordinate with the UM Division of Public Safety and Security for all sharpshooting activities on university property.
- Notwithstanding all of the above items, the professional sharpshooters are responsible for following safety protocols to ensure no injuries at all times.

15. Will walking and biking trails be closed in designated parks?

Yes, all walking and biking trails are closed every day within designated parks from 3 p.m. to midnight Jan. 2-27, 2019.

16. Will the border-to-border trail remain open and the dog parks?

Yes, all parks through which the boarder-to-border trail is constructed will remain open. All dog parks will remain open as well.

17. Where can I get a copy of the MDNR permit?

MDNR issued a Scientific Collector's permit to White Buffalo, Inc., the City's contractor, to examine different management techniques to control the overabundance of white-tailed deer in the city of Ann Arbor. The research permit specifically approves use of the combined approach of surgical sterilization and sharpshooting as the selected management technique. White Buffalo requested an amendment to this permit to incorporate the 2019 activities. The permit is available to view [online](#).

18. Will White Buffalo be shooting on private property?

Yes, private properties were identified by the city for lethal removal activities. All private

property sharpshooting will be confined to that property. Abutting property owners will be notified of activities and residents' daily routines will not be impacted. White Buffalo's sharpshooters will remain within the confines of permissioned properties. They will not be following deer onto adjacent properties nor shooting on any property without permission. Unauthorized trespassing is not permitted and will be subject to enforcement action. As a result of safety precautions followed by White Buffalo personnel, citizens can safely walk, bike or drive through all neighborhoods during culling activities. Private property in Wards 1 and 2 and one property in Ward 3 have been selected. The use of private property near Mary Beth Doyle Park in Ward 3 was utilized in last year's cull and was described in an [implementation plan memo sent to City Council on Dec. 4, 2017](#).

19. In what neighborhoods will sharpshooting occur on private property?

Sharpshooting will occur on selected private property in Wards 1 and 2 and on one property in Ward 3. Prior written consent is obtained from the property owners and abutting property owners are notified. Residents can continue with their normal daily routines since all deer management activities will occur on the small number of city-selected private property only. Sharpshooting will not occur on ANY property where prior written consent hasn't been obtained or where adjacent homeowners haven't been notified.

20. Besides informing adjacent homeowners, will the city inform other residents of sharpshooting locations?

No. At the advice of the city's contractor who performs sharpshooting activities in other communities, it is safer to not publicize specific private property addresses. Their experience has been that they can operate safely within the confines of pre-selected private parcels.

21. Should citizens modify their normal routine when White Buffalo is shooting on private property?

As stated above, residents do not need to modify their normal routines during culling activities on private property. Also, please see answer to question 16 regarding implemented safety precautions.

22. How will the city inform residents of cull activities?

It's important to note that safety is our top priority. The deer will be lethally removed by highly experienced sharpshooters who are specially trained to conduct culls in urban settings with precision, accuracy and safety as their top priorities. The city will inform residents of potential cull locations in parks and nature areas via a variety of communication channels including:

- Signage, including Spanish and Chinese translations, at the identified park and nature area entrances.
- Postcards mailed to residents in close proximity to closed parks within Wards 1 & 2.
- Media release.
- Resident newsletter article.
- Email notifications (subscribe at www.a2gov.org/deermanagement, "email notifications" section).
- Social media.
- City of Ann Arbor website and deer management project web page updates.

- Community Television Network.
- Ann Arbor Public Schools and University of Michigan notifications.

23. What happens if I hear gunshots during lethal operations?

AAPD and White Buffalo personnel are working closely to coordinate communications throughout all deer management operations. However, any citizen who hears gunfire and is concerned about it should call 9-1-1 directly to report it.

24. What were the results of last year's deer management program?

A Deer Management Update Report was provided to City Council in June 2018, which is available [online](#).

Questions

WHAT TO DO IF....

- You observe or suspect unlawful activity (such as baiting on private property) or hear shots fired and are concerned, call the Police Department: Emergency 9-1-1 | Non-Emergency 734-994-2911.
- Poaching is illegal. If you suspect poaching is occurring, call the MDNR Report All Poaching (RAP) hotline at 800-292-7800 or visit the RAP website for information about how to report a violation.
- You have additional questions about the city's Deer Management Implementation Plan:
 - a. Check out answers to frequently asked questions, which are updated regularly: www.a2gov.org/deermanagement.
 - b. Email deermanagement@a2gov.org or call the deer hotline at 734.794.6295. Staff will try to return calls within 24 hours Monday–Friday.