

Overview

The Urban Deer Advisory Committee was established as a select committee by Council resolution on October 4, 2010. The scope of work for the Committee was clearly established under the Urban Deer Management Committee Terms of Reference which included:

- Assess the results of the public survey on urban deer population;
- Coordinate a count of the urban deer population within the boundaries of the City;
- Identify acceptable options for the management of the urban deer population;
- Identify strategies for the management of human/deer conflicts;
- Present final report to Council with recommendations on management of the urban deer population.

Results of the Urban Deer Resident Survey (*Attachment 1*) and the Urban Deer count (*Attachment 2*), a summary table of population reduction options (provided by the Ministry of the Environment) (*Attachment 3*) and an outline for a public education strategy (*under Committee Recommendations*) are attached for information.

The City-wide deer counts, conducted by members of the Urban Deer Management Committee, were carried out over three successive Saturdays in November 2010. An average of 92 deer, both mule deer and whitetail were observed; 82 of those counted were mule deer. The total density of all deer counted in the City of Cranbrook is 3.7 deer/km². The total density of mule deer is 3.3 deer/km². Based on the survey counts, the overall density of deer in Cranbrook is relatively low. By comparison, the City of Kimberley reported a density of 20 deer/km². The recommended density for deer management to take effect in Helena, Montana is 9.6 deer/km².

Despite the fact that present mule deer numbers are low, anecdotal information from the public suggests that the deer population in Cranbrook is increasing and residents continue to express growing frustration with a range of deer issues from property damage to aggression towards both pets and humans. It appears to the Committee that several resident herds of mule deer have become well established within the City and, having grown up in an urban environment, are now habituated to humans. A number of incidents of aggression including attacks on pets and people have been reported along with an increasing number of reported predators (*see Attachment 4*).

Committee Conclusions

The Committee has concluded that it is impractical to eliminate all deer from the City since others will move in from the surrounding rural areas to take their place. Some form of a public education program is needed to assist residents with information to mitigate property damage and reduce deer/human incidents. The most immediate concern is directed to “problem deer” and public safety but the

Committee concludes a longer term program is needed to limit the overall population of mule deer to acceptable levels.

Committee Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the understanding that wildlife are a provincial management issue; that all rules and regulations, both municipal and provincial, must be abided by; and that the focus of any deer management strategy would focus on problem deer.

1. Public Education Campaign (Ongoing)

Develop and implement a public education program on the basis that the deer will continue to have a presence in the City. It is recommended that City staff liaise with the Ministry of the Environment and other urban centres to develop a regional/provincial plan for urban deer management. The education program should assist the public in identifying problem deer numbers and should provide information about how residents can deal with deer issues including the impact on their private yards.

The education program should also include information on the following:

-KEY MESSAGE “deer are always going to be a part of life in Cranbrook.”

-provide information on mule deer life cycle and interaction with urban public. Information is available readily through the BC Conservation Foundation and the Ministry of Environment. The community of Grand Forks has also generated a public information brochure.

-provide information on hazing techniques, appropriate repellents, fencing, etc.

-create and manage an Urban Deer hotline/email address where reports on various deer issues in the community can be received and logged in order to assist in ongoing monitoring. This item is discussed further in Recommendation 5.

2. Cull Problem Deer (1 to 2 months)

Carry out a cull of problem deer from areas where incidents have been reported. This is identified as a short-term solution. The Committee has identified two target areas for the proposed cull: the Baker Hill area and Victoria Avenue and 2nd Street North. A short term goal to reduce “problem urban centre deer” by 10 to 15 percent needs to be considered. Based on the figures provided in the Urban Deer count results, a cull of 10 to 15 percent means removing between 10 to 12 animals. Council would need to request Ministry of Environment Conservation Officers carry out the controlled cull. It is important that this controlled cull take place before fawning season. It is necessary to research further how the meat can be best

utilized. On-going monitoring would also be required.

3. Capture and Relocate (1+ Years)

Capture and relocate is perceived by the public as the most humane, yet research indicates otherwise (*see Attachment 5*).

Before such a recommendation is accepted by Council, it is necessary to ask the following:

- What are the long term opportunities? (1 to 5 years)
- What are the risks/liabilities to the City to have volunteers manage any relocation?
- What are the acceptable potential animal losses?
- What resources are available from the province to assist/lead a relocation campaign?

It is recommended that the City of Cranbrook and City of Kimberley work together to share information on their successes and failures, as each community moves forward with their respective deer management programs. The City of Kimberley is actively working towards a Capture and Relocation program, and should Cranbrook decide to carry out a cull, the possibility exists to share results between the communities and thereby potentially reduce costs.

4. Controlled Perimeter Mule Deer Doe Hunt (2+ Years)

Control the growth of Cranbrook's deer population by means of a bow hunt for does in the area surrounding the City. Consultation with MOE, the Regional District of East Kootenay and rural landowners surrounding the City of Cranbrook is a key component when considering this option. This type of management option would require changes to the current provincial hunting regulations and should be considered as a long term option. The Committee believes permits should be limited to experienced hunters who would be responsible to seek written permission from private landowners to access their land for hunting.

Controlled hunting can reduce an over abundant deer problem. Techniques in reducing deer numbers must be humane, safe for residents and pose minimal community disruption. As deer impacts and deer numbers increase, residents may shift their attitude from viewing deer as a local environmental resource to perceiving them as pests.

Controlled archery hunts and/or use of MOE sharp shooters are also recommended options. All deer killed must be processed for human consumption to a special permit holder, a suitable food bank, or a needy family. Where possible the recipient of the meat should pay for the processing.

5. **Monitoring**

Establish the Deer Management Advisory Committee as an ongoing body to monitor and assess issues related to urban deer and report annually to Council. A designated City contact will be necessary for the public to report incidents. Responsibilities of the Committee should include:

- organize and conduct an annual City wide deer count
- monitor and report on numbers and species of deer, predator sightings, complaints, incidents of deer conflict and bylaw infractions
- conduct resident surveys as deemed necessary (every two or three years)