

A Wildlife Success Story

At one point in the late 19th century, white-tailed deer nearly disappeared from the Texas landscape. Over harvest and alteration of natural plant communities had reduced or eliminated deer numbers across much of Texas. Protective measures were taken, including the first deer seasons, harvest limits and the establishment of the Game Warden Service. This protection from exploitation was accompanied by adaptation of deer to altered landscapes and widespread restocking by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

From their near disappearance over 100 years ago, white-tailed deer have been restored to most areas they previously occupied and may have expanded their range into historically unoccupied areas of Texas. The restoration of white-tailed deer is a wildlife management success story in Texas and many other states.

The current status of white-tailed deer populations nationally is also a testament to the resiliency and adaptability of this species. White-tailed deer can thrive side-by-side with human populations in Texas. The adaptability of white-tailed deer and the desire of people to live and work in areas that retain “green spaces” have resulted in deer overabundance in many areas.



Information and Assistance

For more information and assistance regarding suburban and overabundant deer issues, contact Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at (800) 792-1112.

Detailed publications on managing white-tailed deer in the suburban environment can be found at the Cornell Cooperative Extension website <http://wildlifecontrol.info/ccewdmp/publications.htm>.

Reference

Bob Cook. 1984. Texas. pp 457-474 White-tailed Deer Ecology and Management. A Wildlife Management Institute Book. Stackpole Books. Harrisburg PA. 870 pp.



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Living with Overabundant White-tailed Deer in Texas



A Way of Life

The white-tailed deer is one of the most popular and recognizable species of wildlife in Texas. They are a significant recreational resource among hunters and those who just like to watch wildlife. White-tailed deer are also an important economic resource to many rural landowners who lease hunting rights on their property and the businesses that profit from traveling hunters. They are also an increasingly common animal in and around many Texas urban and suburban communities.

Overabundance

An overabundant deer herd can be described as one that has exceeded the capacity of the native plant community. Overabundant deer herds can result in concerns for the deer, for native plant communities, for urban landscapes and the health, safety and economic well being of local communities. Neighborhoods across Texas are beginning to confront these issues which have been a concern of communities in the northeastern states for several decades. As overabundant white-tailed deer reduce the health of native plant communities, other wildlife species can become less common. Overabundant herds have deer-health problems such as starvation, increased numbers of parasites and more disease.

Overabundant deer in close proximity to people also cause concerns such as:

- Automobile accidents from deer collisions or drivers trying to avoid deer.
- Severe damage to landscaping.
- Buck (male) deer that are unafraid of people can be dangerous during the breeding season (fall and winter).
- Increased numbers of disease causing agents such as ticks carrying Lyme's disease.
- Deer feeding resulting in more reproduction and further aggravation of all overabundant deer concerns.



Considerations

What can be done to address homeowner concerns regarding overabundant deer populations? This brochure seeks only to raise awareness and provide sources of additional information for individuals and communities confronting this issue. There are professional wildlife biologists employed by government agencies or within the private sector who can provide more detailed information and assist you with specific situations.

If you live in, are planning to move to, or are developing subdivisions in an area of the state with high deer numbers, such as the Hill Country immediately west of Interstate 35, there are several things that should be considered to reduce the risk of creating an overabundant deer population or to lessen the impact of an existing problem.

Homeowners

- Do not feed deer. Supplemental feed will only increase the number of deer in the neighborhood.
- Work with neighbors to monitor deer numbers in your neighborhood and impacts to your landscape.
- Landscape with plants that deer do not prefer to eat.
- Consider removal of adult deer through lethal and non-lethal means.
- Limit movement of deer into the neighborhood from surrounding areas with high fencing.
- Work cooperatively, from the start, with other residents and neighboring landowners in deer monitoring and management. This is particularly important in areas where deer numbers are high in surrounding areas.

Developers

Developers of large-lot subdivisions or subdivisions with large blocks of green space should:

- Consult wildlife professionals in the development design stage to maximize deer control options should they be needed.
- Limit deed restrictions that hamper future control efforts, such as restrictions prohibiting all hunting.
- Consider deer management measures in deed restrictions. Limitations on deer feeding would be an example.

Potential Homeowners

Land and homebuyers concerned about deer impacts should:

- Talk to the developer, real estate agent or local wildlife biologist about possible deer overabundance in the area.
- Determine community's deed restrictions, policy or plan for dealing with overabundant deer.
- Plan for eventual deer overabundance problems at your new home when thinking about landscaping.

White-tailed deer are an important natural resource and a part of Texas' natural heritage. However, they are currently considered more of a nuisance in some parts of their range. Thoughtful, proactive management of overabundant deer in urban and suburban settings can help ensure that white-tailed deer are always viewed in a positive light.