

Debunking the Claims

Claim: There are too many deer.

Response: This claim is unsubstantiated. Neither the CRD nor the MoE (Ministry of Environment) have conducted any deer counts within the CRD boundaries. According to a 1985 cooperative report between the Ministries of Environment and Forests, the number of black-tailed deer on Vancouver Island was between 150,000 and 300,000 in 1979. In 2011 the MoE estimated the population to be between 45,000 and 65,000, a serious decline over a 30 year period.

There is also a misconception that deer are "moving into the city". Black-tailed deer do not migrate over great distances. Family groups consisting of a doe and her fawns, or occasionally several does, reside in very small ranges, close to where they were born. Bucks have a slightly larger range. They are adept at living discreetly in small thickets and forested areas within the city, so when these spaces are lost to development, they are displaced into more public areas, giving the impression of there being a sudden increase in their number.

Claim: There is potential for disease transmission from deer to humans.

Response: Deer populations in BC do not carry most of the diseases listed in the Ministry of Environment reports, and when they do, they present a very low public health risk, according to BC's Centre for Disease Control. There is no evidence to support an epidemic of Lyme disease in BC. The rates of human cases of Lyme are less than 1 per 200,000 a year. Studies show that **culling deer does not reduce Lyme disease occurrence.**¹⁻² Infected ticks pick up the Lyme bacterium

from small mammals, not deer. The persistent falsehood that deer are the culprit generates public fear and is being used by cull advocates to justify a slaughter. There is greater Lyme disease risk through ticks acquired from indoor/outdoor pets.

Claim: There are more car accidents involving deer.

Response: Despite human population growth and more cars on our roads, the CRD's own figures show that in recent years the number of deer/car collisions have remained relatively constant. According to ICBC stats, less than 1% of car accidents in Greater Victoria involve deer. High risk drivers are those who engage in drinking, speeding and ignoring traffic controls.³ The primary causes of accidents are driver speed and/or inattention - not deer!

Claim: Gardens, landscape plants, crops and community forests are being "damaged".

Response: While deer may do a certain amount of damage, there are many proven, non-lethal measures that can be taken to protect property, such as fencing and repellents. Farmers who have invested in fencing agricultural areas in the CRD are incurring minimal to no crop damage. **FENCING WORKS.** The real damage to agriculture production and nature in our region has been caused by development. Deer do not damage community forests. They are part of them and have been so for thousands of years. Human development, not deer activity, is responsible for the loss of habitat for many plant, mammal and bird species. As development spreads, without protected wild spaces and green

corridors, deer are forced into urban and suburban areas.

Claim: People are experiencing "aggressive deer behaviour".

Response: Normally deer run when they feel threatened, but during fawning season, their behaviour may be less predictable. On very rare occasions, a mother deer may become aggressive to protect her fawns. A public education program could prevent conflict situations from occurring.

What is Fuelling the Cull Frenzy?

In 2010 the MoE commissioned wildlife biologist Gayle Hesse to prepare a report⁴ which would be distributed to the municipalities of BC in response to pressure from local governments asking for solutions for their deer problems. Municipal politicians were receiving complaints from vocal minorities about urban deer.

The Hesse Report highlighted the Helena, Montana clovertrap/boltgun cull of their urban deer. This cruel method involves baiting and trapping deer at night, on private residential properties, and killing them with a bolt gun in the predawn hours to avoid any public observation or outcry. This so-called "groundbreaking" cull method has been denounced by the Humane Society of the US and by respected wildlife scientists. Cranbrook, Kimberley and Invermere decided to "import" this system with the blessing of the MoE.

Despite humane concerns, it was used in the Kootenays last fall and winter, where bucks, pregnant does and fawns were

indiscriminately slaughtered, creating, according to a well known Kootenay resident, the "greatest controversy in the Kootenays in over 50 years". The culls have pitted neighbour against neighbour and resulted in a citizen lawsuit. Initially, the reason given for this lethal measure was *deer aggression* (isolated cases of protective doe behaviour, caught on film and played repeatedly by irresponsible media), but has since been modified to include garden damage, to allow for more extensive culling.

Instead of implementing an effective, educational program to teach people how to co-exist with wildlife, the MoE demonize the deer in order to justify culls.

Will Victoria Join the "Kootenay Cull Club"?

Victoria may be headed in that direction. In the summer of 2011 the CRD posted small ads in the local papers asking for feedback on deer 'damage'. Based on complaints from some of the 400 respondents (which represent less than 1% of CRD population), a regional deer management strategy was formed.

The CRD then selected a decidedly pro-cull CAG (Citizens Advisory Group) which was clearly not representative of Victoria's population - one member was actually a bowhunting lobbyist! The CAG submitted recommendations to the CRD, including lethal options such as the clovertrap/boltgun method, bowhunting, sharpshooting on large properties including parks, golf courses, university and government lands, as well as extended hunting seasons.

Even though the MoE and CRD cannot

back up their assertions about actual deer population numbers, they use these to justify a cull. The CAG report states that "...urban populations are increasing even if overall counts remain the same". The same document does not address the significant deer habitat loss due to the rapid escalation of development in the CRD. Squeezed into ever decreasing spaces, the deer become more visible to property owners.

The MoE and CRD justify a deer cull based on complaints from some residents, claiming that Victoria has reached its **Cultural Carrying Capacity** (CCC), a term indicating the intolerance of local human populations to the presence of animals of any given species. Many residents who see deer in backyards and parks assume that the population has increased as government claims, when in fact the MoE's own figures say otherwise. Hence, CCC is influenced by politics and government policy and has nothing to do with biology or facts.

Cull = More Culls

There is substantial evidence that deer culls result in population increases through the **Compensatory Rebound Effect**⁵⁻⁷. The remaining deer produce more offspring in response to the increased availability of food. This explains why culling becomes a cycle of violence year after year.

Non-Lethal Measures Work!

There are many effective and humane alternatives to reducing deer interactions with humans. These include: public

education, innovative road signage for established wildlife crossing areas, repellents such as Bobbex, the SpayVac immuno-contraceptive, deer resistant plantings, appropriate fencing, and municipal planning to accommodate wildlife with corridors and green spaces. For more information see the following report⁸ and these links⁹⁻¹³.

An Urgent Call to Action

Culling comes at a great cost: financially to the taxpayers who must fund ongoing culls; socially within communities, where it creates division and enmity between neighbours; emotional trauma to the many citizens who have compassion for wildlife; to the deer, who pay the ultimate price.

The CRD is currently deliberating on the deer issue, at present consulting with provincial and municipal governments for buy-in.

If you are opposed to a CRD deer slaughter, it is critical that you do the following:

Sign the Petition to the CRD:

www.deersafevictoria.com/home

Contact your Mayor and Council:

www.crd.bc.ca/about/members.htm

Email Minister of Environment Terry Lake:

env.minister@gov.bc.ca

Let them know that you strongly oppose a deer cull.

References

These references can be found by following this link:

www.deersafevictoria.com/home/knkref

1. Surprise Culprits of Lyme Disease Boom
2. Why Hunting Won't Reduce Human Risk of Lyme Disease
3. ICBC Service Plan 2011-2013
4. Hesse Report [British Columbia Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis](#)
5. Compensatory Rebound Effect
6. Myth: Culling Deer Reduces Herd Size
7. Effect of Hunting on Deer Reproduction
8. [Developing A Progressive Non-Lethal Human/Deer Conflict Resolution Strategy For British Columbia](#)
9. Humane Alternatives
10. MoE Gardener's Guide To Preventing Deer and Elk Damage
11. Non-Lethal Deer Population Control for Urban Environments
12. HSUS What to Do About Deer
13. [Deer Control Options](#) (NCAT)

To Kill OR Not to Kill



The Ministry of Environment and the Capital Regional District provide a list of reasons to rationalize the killing of deer in the CRD.

ALL FAIL UNDER SCRUTINY

