

## SEPTEMBER 2020 DEER COUNT RESULTS

### Background & Purpose

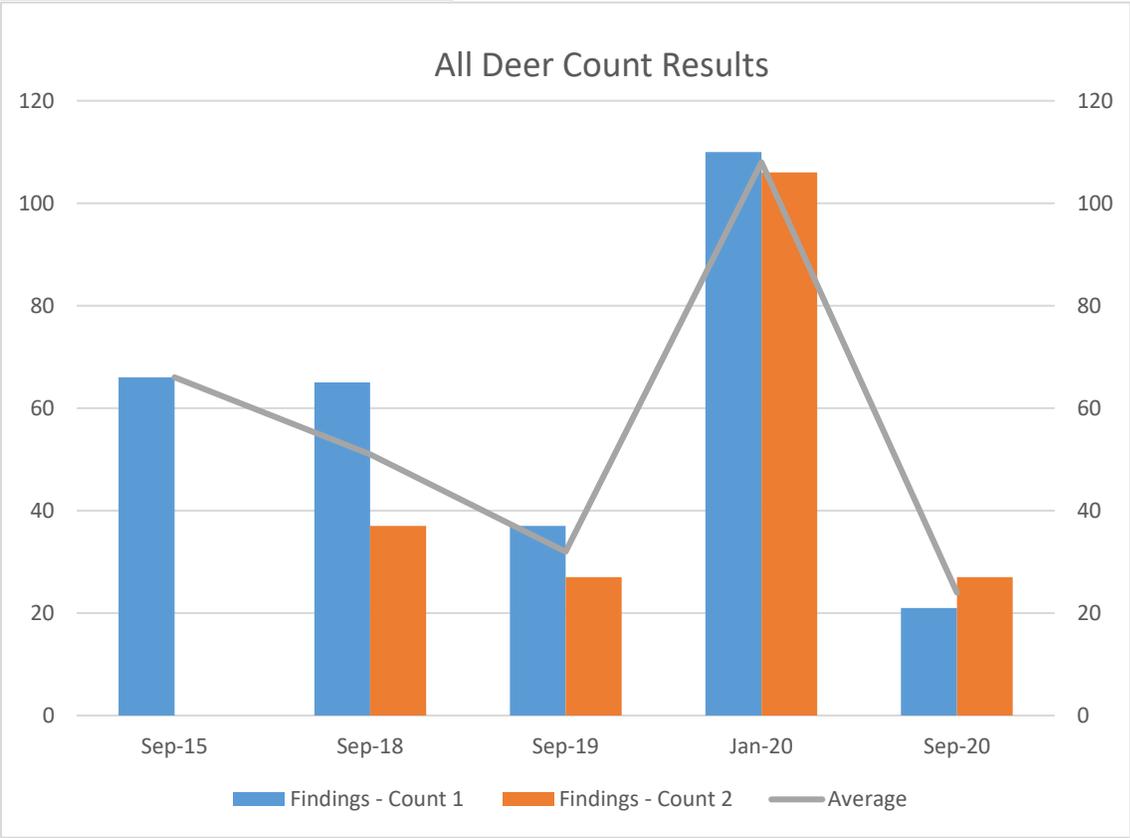
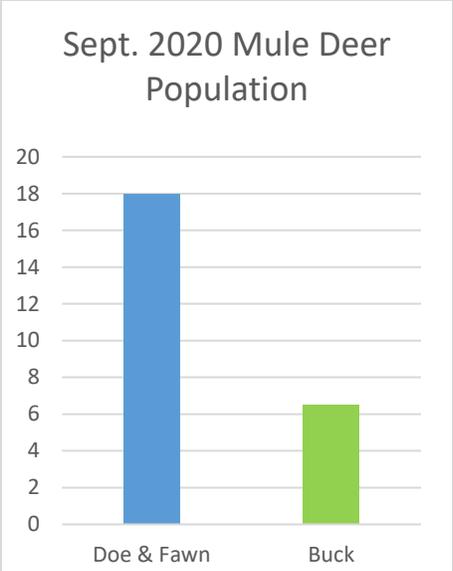
In recent year's urban deer have become a topic of discussion due to safety concerns with vehicles and pedestrians, impacts to vegetation, and the economic implications in managing their populations. The deer counts are completed to monitor their populations and demographics, which will assist the Urban Deer Task Force to formulate recommendations for council and for the development of an urban deer action strategy.

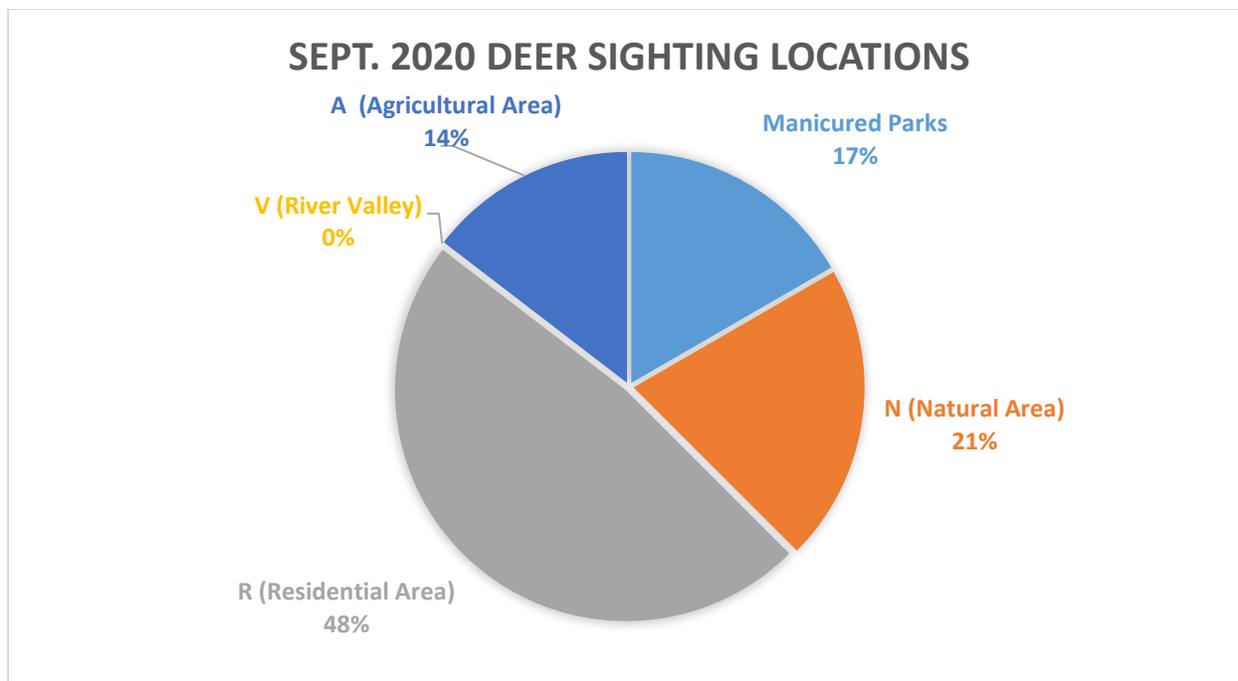
### Methods

Between 2015 and 2018, different approaches to the deer count were taken. In 2015, a large-scale count with 100 volunteers took place in September. This was refined in 2018 by the app 'NatureLynx', which replaced paper methods by collecting the data online including geotags and photographs. In 2020, the main intent is to ensure full coverage in town while being efficient with resources. This is the second count of 2020, which coincides with the timing of the previous years count. Doing the count on the same time of year and same time of day is important to bring more meaning to the comparison from year to year. On September 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> between 10:00am - 11:00am, a combination of 12-15 of town staff and 3-5 task force members were given specific routes in town to cover as much area as possible while collecting data. The deer counts were conducted within the urban footprint of the town in 2020, but also looking out along the town boundary. This is consistent with previous counts. The Town utilized drone technology to cover the fields west of Westmount neighbourhood. The total count was adjusted on September 22 due to duplicate reporting: One doe and two fawns were counted in the same proximate location within close timeframe, which reduced the day's count by three.

### RESULTS

- The total count each day were comparable at **21 deer on September 22nd** and **27 deer on September 23<sup>rd</sup>**.
- Based on the 2 counts we found an **total average of 25.5** deer within the Town of Okotoks. The average for does 12.5, fawns 6.5 and bucks 6.5.
- No other deer species were identified other than mule deer.
- The September count in 2015 and 2018 were 66 and 64 respectively. The September 2020 count is about half of the previous two counts in September 2015 and 2018, slightly lower than September 2019 but comparable and significantly lower, about three quarters, in Jan 2020.





In regards to location of deer in the municipality the major areas are residential areas and maintained parks. This may be just because there is more residential area within our town limits. Deer may also be more visible in the residential areas. This data varies from previous years, where the majority of deer were sited in the natural areas.

### Discussion & Recommendations

As discussed by the Urban Deer Task Force members who have expertise in wildlife, deer are more active at dawn and dusk; therefore, it was decided that a count at these times would be beneficial and future counts should replicate this for data comparability. To help establish deer population data please also consider the following recommendations for future counts;

1. Continue to complete two consecutive deer counts (within two day period)
2. Complete the September & January counts at dusk or dawn
3. Utilize similar methodology

2020 was the first time it was completed at dusk in the winter (the January count) and deer counts were significantly higher than previous counts in September during the day. Going forward we recommend to conduct dusk or dawn counts in September/January to see if there is a seasonal distribution difference so we can compare to previous data.

### Resources

- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute
- Town of Okotoks – Parks Business Centre
- Urban Deer Task Force