

Urban Deer Task Force  
Thursday, November 12, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.  
via ZOOM

## **A G E N D A**

### [Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting URL:

<https://zoom.us/j/96312958992?pwd=YTJ4NWtGRzZ6RU1IOVNUI9ZaWxYQT09>

Meeting ID: 963 1295 8992

Passcode: 783529

1. Review of October 14, 2020 Notes and Action/Discussion Items
2. Colin Gainer, Town of Okotoks Senior Planner
  - Fences (verbal report)
3. Gordon White, Town of Okotoks Parks Technician, Urban Forest
  - Review of Property Damage from Deer (verbal report)
  - Finalized Deer Count Report
4. Draft Control Measures for Urban Deer in Okotoks
5. Letter from Resident E. Jenkins
6. Round Table Discussion
7. Next Steps

Urban Deer Task Force (UDTF)  
 Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.  
 Municipal Centre Council Chamber

### Notes and Action/Discussion Items

**Members Present** Grant Pryznyk, Chair  
 Gabriele Barrie  
 Troy Bourque  
 Chris Mills  
 Don Cottrell  
 Shawn Lorenz

**Member(s) Absent** Neil Penner

**Town of Okotoks  
 Representatives Present** Joan Botkin, Communications Manager

**External Representatives** Liz White, Animal Alliance of Canada  
 Wayne McCrory, Wildlife Biologist

	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Action/Discussion</b>
1.	Review of Sept. 10, 2020 Notes and Action Items	n/a	n/a
2.	Animal Alliance of Canada Presentation	Presentation by Liz White <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liz White helped to develop Animal Alliance which focuses on human/animal conflict in a non-lethal way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of success of cull in Oak Bay and Kimberly; experienced backlash from community and sought other solutions;</li> <li>• In Cranbrook and Invermere – population increased after cull; complaints had not decreased; currently looking at other options;</li> <li>• Traps did not capture trouble animals – many were fawns not considered;</li> <li>• Culls can be divisive in communities;</li> <li>• Translocation initiatives also not successful; can relocate to other urban settings and other deer will move into the void;</li> <li>• Kimberly and Invermere have been most successful in getting rid of attractants; hiring a bylaw officer who is specifically focused on ensuring compliance with bylaws deterring deer i.e. fruit on ground, bird feeders;</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kimberly bylaws allow for higher, targeted fencing to help keep deer out of gardens;</li> <li>• Recommends collaborative approach within the community as most successful – would be willing to connect Task Force with councillor who lead this initiative;</li> <li>• Hazing – research has been done where there is deer and elk and the focus was getting does out of the territory before they give birth so their territory is out of town; hazing occurred in the fall during the rut to mitigate male deer behaviour;</li> <li>• Hazing is very expensive and must be done repeatedly;</li> <li>• Kimberly concerned with chasing deer across roads with hazing;</li> <li>• Use of contraceptives – initially need to tranquilize deer to tag them and give them first dose; requires a second booster dose. After that can be done through dart – will forward a report once it comes out.</li> </ul>
3.	Wildlife Biologist presentation	Wayne McCrory - Research into human/deer conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hazing has had some success in certain areas, i.e. Banff/Waterton using specially trained dogs; also used air guns and other noise makers;</li> <li>• Several municipalities in BC interior decided to do a cull between 2010-2016; made no difference in population;</li> <li>• East Kootenays removed over 400 deer during 2010-2016 – mostly mule deer; conclusion was that this approach was very controversial;</li> <li>• Culling bears had the same results with more bear coming into the void left by the removal of other bear;</li> <li>• Suggests that Task Force consider the Town's surrounding area and determine where the deer are immigrating from. Where is summer/winter range? Are there attractants in nearby fields that will bring them into the area? Gather information/research on a larger geographic approach.</li> </ul>

	Summary Discussion	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education seems to be the most effective.</li> <li>• Liz indicated that Okotoks may be at carrying capacity and numbers are fairly static; however, there's some indication that numbers are continuing to increase.</li> </ul>
4.	Review of Deer Count	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don, Shawn, Chris, Troy, Gabriele, Neil were able to participate; hard to see the deer; timing was late in the day and made it more difficult to see the deer;</li> <li>• Don - Deer were in same location as previous count;</li> <li>• Shawn – deer had moved around;</li> <li>• Gabriele – overall during the summer saw fewer deer than in 2019;</li> <li>• Chris saw no deer;</li> <li>• Anecdotally there seemed to be less deer in Town this summer.</li> <li>• Could the pathways act like a wildlife corridor throughout Town?</li> </ul>
5.	Round Table Discussion	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Council update – include a summary of past two meetings, the options spread sheet;</li> <li>• A reminder will be forwarded regarding presentation time.</li> </ul>
6.	Next Steps	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a summary document on all tools/levers with pros/cons and other considerations.</li> <li>• Troy will create a draft and Don will assist;</li> <li>• A Google shared document will be developed;</li> <li>• First draft of strategy will be ready for Task Force meeting in November.</li> </ul> <p>For November meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite someone from Planning to discuss fencing options in Town</li> <li>• Invite someone from Parks to talk about damage to Town property and actions Town has taken to protect property</li> </ul>
7.	The meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm		

## SEPTEMBER 2020 DEER COUNT RESULTS

### Background & Purpose

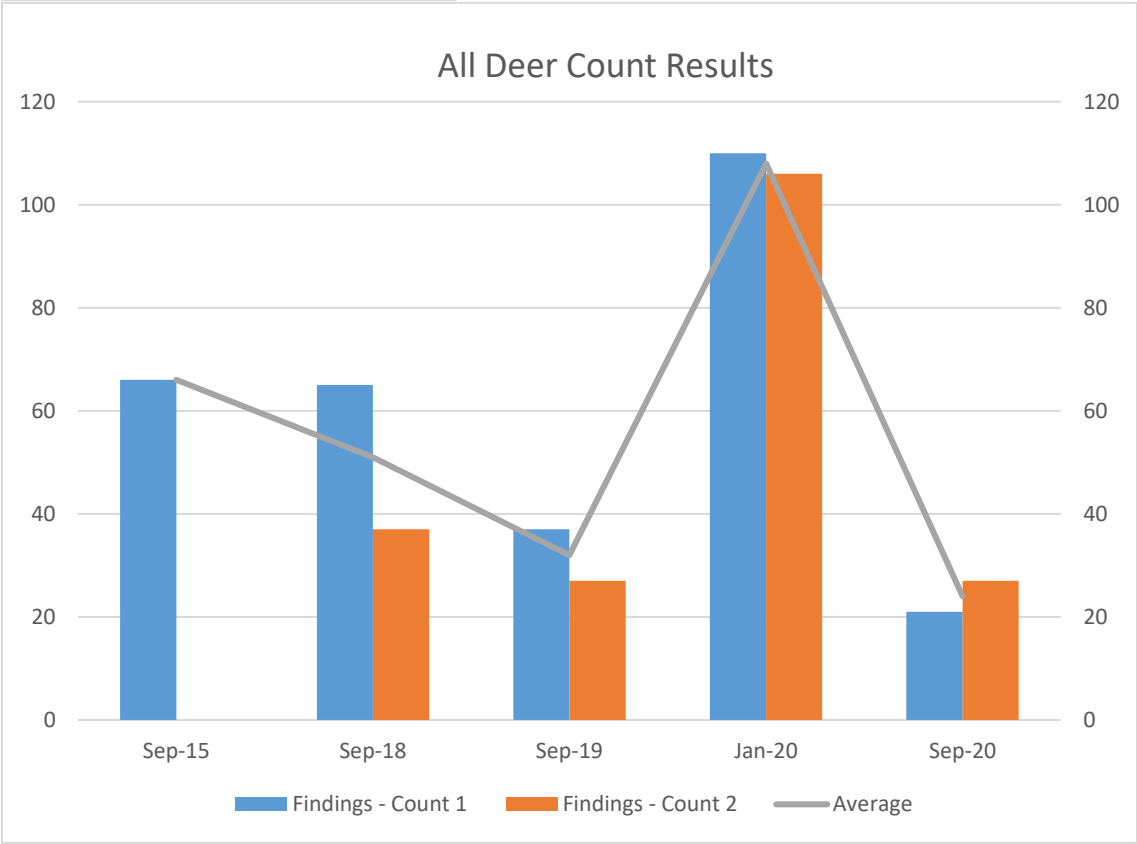
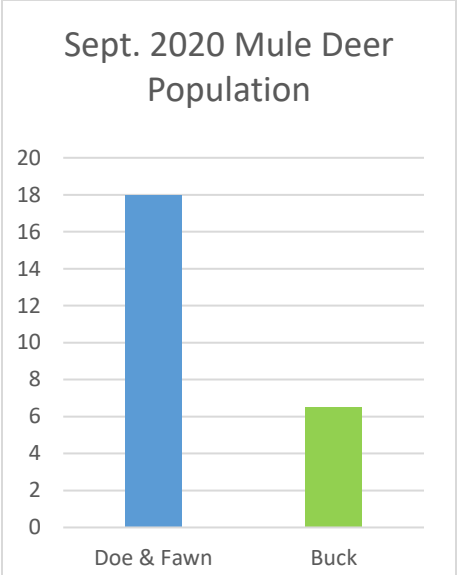
In recent year's urban deer have become a topic of discussion due to safety concerns with vehicles and pedestrians, impacts to vegetation, and the economic implications in managing their populations. The deer counts are completed to monitor their populations and demographics, which will assist the Urban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

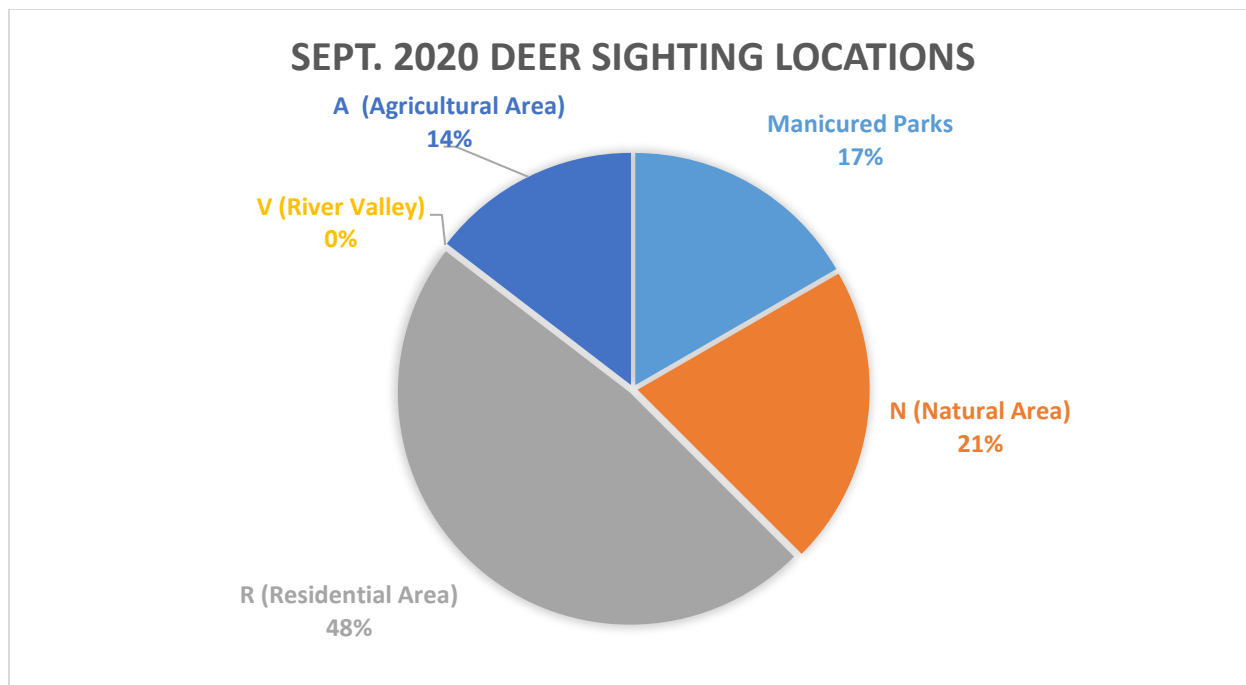
### Methods

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

## Control Measures for Urban Deer in Okotoks

Measures/Actions	Pros	Cons	Comments
Fencing	Prevents access to gardens, flowers, and trees. Landowner/house owner can make personal decisions.	Not practical for front lawns and in some areas. High fences may block views and not be wanted in some neighbourhoods.	May require zoning and bylaw changes.
Hazing	Prevents habituation. Multiple methods and options.	Needs to be consistent and sustained to be effective.	
Immuno-contraception	Non-lethal population control.	Expensive and possibly labour intensive. Treatment needs to be repeated every couple of years.	Technology improving and cost in future will likely decrease.
Relocation	Reduces population, removes problem deer.	May return to urban areas. Expensive. Some mortality likely.	
Bylaw Changes	Deterrent to people feeding and habituation of deer. Bird feeders.	Additional bylaw and enforcement resources	
Flora/Gardens/Trees	Planting plants that deer do not tend to eat. Limit fruit bearing trees.	Limits flora options.	
Culling	Effective population control. Eliminates problem deer.	Socially unacceptable for some people. Will cause divisions. Must be continuous for population control.	Last resort option.



## Emmie Jenkins

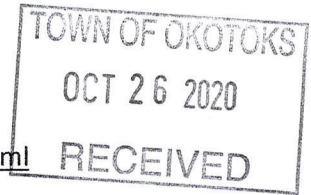
---

From: Emmie Jenkins [REDACTED]  
Sent: October 23, 2020 3:19 PM  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: deer issues..... again

Copy:

Mayor W. Robertson

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/21/us/woman-cited-pet-deer-gores-neighbor-trnd/index.html>



Please do not take this personally, but I have to renew my request to have something done to the Okotoks deer population.

Friday October 9 at 2:35 am (digital clocks!) I woke up to frantic stamping, scratching noises that seemed to come from inside or very close to the house. Checking our front veranda there was a dark roundish mass, from which, after a closer look, two flailing hooved legs thrashed around. After I switched more lights on, our newspaper delivery lady (Jamie) appeared from her car parked on Woodhaven and she told me that she had noticed the young deer and had phoned both police and Fish & Wildlife 'about 20 min. ago'.

We got a bowl of water to see if the animal would like some, maybe calm him/her down. It had a very long drink. Only the deer's hind quarters were still on our veranda, the rest of the body was hanging on the outside of the railing; obviously the hips were too wide to fit through the 4"wide bars and all 4 of the legs were wildly moving, going nowhere.

With the help of Jamie's son, AND blanket over the deer's head AND a young willing passerby, we managed to # 1: Avoid the deer's flailing legs while bending the bars wider and # 2 Push the deer up and back through the railing onto our veranda. There was blood on the railings where he/she struggled and she could not get up from her splayed position.

The 4 of us stood around a corner on the veranda to give her a way out, should the deer get up and run. But when Jamie moved slightly in the deer's direction to retrieve her phone that was ringing, it panicked and ended up with her head and 1 'shoulder' through another section of the railing. We could stop it there, by the same method as before: blanket, bars and pushing it back.

Fish and Wildlife were calling Jamie back (3:30 am or so !!) to see how the situation was..... they suggested we leave the deer alone in the dark and they would check with local police in the morning to see if they needed to come in. This is what we did.

(The RCMP had told Jamie that no-one was available when she called around 2:30 am)

I sat in our living room watching the deer in that pitiful position. After 5 min. he/she dragged herself to the 3 step entry to the veranda only by her front legs and rolled onto the walk, dragging itself further into the grass. Tried to stand up but the hind legs were too far apart at

first.....after 7 min. (those digital clocks!) the animal managed to get up and the hind legs were closer together and responding enough for the deer to cross to our neighbour's lawn - crossing Cimmarron Crescent - where she layed down again but in a much more natural position. Another 5 min. and I saw him/her walking very stiffly and weaving her way up and over the berm towards the Foothills Comp. Highschool.

Around 4 am I woke up again to see an RCMP vehicle stopped at our house and an officer checking the property with a flashlight.

The bars in our railing will be a reminder of urban wildlife and the deck can be sanded and stained again, the blood washed off, of course, and the deer's fur all scattered in the wind.

I am attaching a link to a deer incident in Colorado....., no we are not there yet. We are not too far off, considering the fact that I have a friend whose little dog was attacked in their backyard and needed surgery. We almost daily view a Mommy deer and two young ones tearing the branches off the mountain ash across the alley as well as all the blossoms and branches that are in the way, off a tree that produced lovely plums in Spring, and for your information, I have packed my bearspray on morning walks along our pathways when 'aggressive deer are in the area': I am a citizen that pays taxes and will not be denied the use of pathways provided by the Town.

We pack bearspray and noise-makers when we go hiking in K-country, ready to be as safe as is in our power: If we see anything at all, it is the backside of a deer that runs away when we disturb it: they are shy animals !

The Town of Okotoks is shirking its responsibilities in saying: 'We have no control, it is not within our power to do anything'. It is my view that the Town of Okotoks must contact Fish and Wildlife with the problem of wildlife, increasingly comfortable with an urban lifestyle, thereby threathening the citizens and their pets and properties. It has nothing to do with whatever plants you grow: they are eating whatever IS there, unless you put a 6 ft. high wire fence up. The thing that the Town of Okotoks CAN do is ticketing those folks that feed deer. As in 90% of complaint cases, this is also something that does not seem to belong to the Town's responsibilities.

So please just let the deer have their way, and let whomever wants to break the By Laws break them. We will have more serious confrontations sooner. In my view: the sooner the better, because then, and only then real action will be taken.

Emmie Jenkins  
Okotoks AB