

DEER MANAGEMENT UPDATE

By Alderman Fred Meyland-Smith
Chairman of the Deer Herd Management
Program Implementation Task Force

In response to concerns raised by our residents regarding the City's deer population, on November 12, 2007 the Mayor appointed a four member Aldermanic Task Force to study the issue and recommend a plan. This group worked for 18 months and covered more than 25 meetings and two town hall forums. Additionally, the Task Force conducted multiple meetings with regional and national wildlife experts and governmental officials from neighboring municipalities.

No one knows conclusively how many deer exist in our City. The maximum population density recommended by experts for a suburban area such as ours is 15 per square mile. Our city is approximately 12 square miles so that would translate to a recommended population of about 180 deer. We suspect we have 3 to 4 times that number – far above the recommended density.

It is important to note that various areas of our City are impacted differently by the deer population. Portions of Town & Country east of I-270 are relatively unaffected while areas such as Mason Road near Queeny Park, Clayton Road between Topping and Weidman, the outer road from Mason Road around to Clayton Road, along Topping Road and along Conway Road and Ladue Road have particularly high interaction with deer.

RISKS

The overpopulation of deer present two very clear and significant problems:

- 1. Human Safety.** The most serious risk is the potential danger to our residents. In the five years ending 2008, there were 237 auto-deer collisions in Town & Country. That is an average of almost one per week. Keep in mind, this figure does not include near misses nor does it include accidents where the deer ran off. This collision total represents only situations where the dead deer was hauled away from the scene.
- 2. Vegetation Destruction.** An adult deer can consume a significant amount of vegetation. Bucks, rubbing their antlers, are particularly destructive to shrubs and small trees. An abundance of deer in an area amplifies the problem and leads to extensive and sometimes irreversible damage. This applies to both decorative landscaping as well as natural habitat for birds and small animals.

DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Task Force proposed a comprehensive plan and the Board of Aldermen approved this recommendation on February 23, 2009 by a vote of 7-1. The plan is a balanced proposal that has both lethal (sharp shooting) and non-lethal (sterilization) components. This plan has received the full approval of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), and the City has received permission from MDC to implement the plan in the fall and winter of this year. MDC has given permission to sterilize up to 100 deer and to sharp shoot up to 100 deer.

The 2009 General Fund budget approved by the Board of Aldermen established an allocation of \$150,000 for deer management. Town Forums on the subject of deer management and how to proceed in our community were held on January 22 and July 17, 2008. On June 8, 2009, the Board unanimously approved a contract with Dr. Tony DeNicola, PhD, wildlife manager with White Buffalo, Inc., to provide the deer management services approved earlier by the Board. The Board's action was prompted by the

growing risk of deer-auto collisions, the continued vegetation destruction and the recognition that nothing has been done to address this matter in Town & Country in the last eight years.

The plan will be administered by experts, hired by the City, will have police department oversight and will have the assurance that the experts (including the veterinarians doing the sterilization procedures) are the best at what they do for the safety of both the residents and the deer.

Speaking of safety, it is important to point out that the sharp shooting will be done by trained experts. They will operate only on tracts of land ten acres in size or larger...and only with the permission of the owner of that land and with notification of neighbors.

CURRENT STATUS

On June 22 and July 13, 2009, acting on one of the recommendations of the Task Force, Mayor Dalton appointed a group of individuals to advise the City on matters associated with implementing the deer management program. Appropriately named the Deer Herd Management Program Implementation Task Force, this group consists of four resident volunteers – Susan Feigenbaum, David Gearhart, Cynthia Pavelka and Scott Rose – and two aldermen – Lynn Wright and Fred Meyland-Smith (Chair). The Implementation Task Force will meet in open session with meeting dates posted on the City's web site in the calendar section. The field work of the program will start with the sterilization phase and move through the lethal phase during the late fall and early winter of this year.