VARIOUS NEWSPAPER ARTICLES 2005-2008

Onorato: Deer population must be curbed

Thursday, March 13, 2008
By John Hayes, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Allegheny County needs a policy to curb its problematic deer population, said County Chief Executive Dan Onorato.

During town hall meetings on upgrading county parks, Mr. Onorato has talked with hunters and property owners about the county's role in wildlife management, he said.

"We really do have a problem," Mr. Onorato said. "I live in the city on the North Side. Last week my dog was going crazy -- there were seven deer in my back yard."

The county has a contract with White Tail Management, a nonprofit archers' group that conducts limited, controlled hunts targeting does during regular archery season in county parks. The group will conduct qualifying shoots May 4 and May 11 at Northside Sportsmen's Association in Marshall. For details call 412-931-9438.

Mr. Onorato said the county needs a broader, more comprehensive plan.

"The deer don't know where the park boundaries are," he said. "It's very clear that appropriate management of wildlife is something we have to do."

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has sole responsibility for the state's wildlife management. County and local governments interested in the control of wild animals are required to submit a management plan to the agency.

"I'm committed to that," Mr. Onorato said. "I want an overall policy -- to establish a plan to deal with the deer in parks and throughout the county."

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First published on March 13, 2008 at 12:00 am

11/17/05 Tom K.

Posted on Thu, Nov. 17, 2005

Town: Don't feed deer

By Walter F. Naedele
Inquirer Staff Writer

Across the nation, towns are trying to fine those who turn their yards into lunch counters for deer.

It's happened in Crystal Falls, Mich.; Lakeway, Texas; Mankato, Minn.; Plover, Wis.; and Teton County, Wyo., places where some fines start at a dollar.

It's happened in Princeton, where a repeat offender was fined $4,000 in 2003 and given a suspended sentence of 30 days in jail.

On Tuesday, the supervisors in Solebury Township unanimously approved an ordinance to ban feeding of deer on private and public property, with a $50 fine for the first offense.

"It's not the magic bullet, but it's a first step," Supervisor Susan Kroupa said.

Proponents intend the ban to reduce problems caused by deer overpopulation, including road accidents and deaths, destruction of landscaping, obliteration of forest saplings, and the spread of Lyme disease.

Since neighboring New Hope enacted a feeding ban in July 2004, Police Chief Rick Pasqualini said he has issued "no citations, [but] several warnings."

warnings have come in response to complaints from neighbors, he said, but no citations have been issued because it is difficult to catch feeders ringing dinner bells for deer.

In Solebury, Kroupa said, "I am aware of a good half-dozen people who feed deer. And my suspicions are there are considerably more."

She acknowledged that the ban would be difficult to enforce.

Medford in Burlington County passed a deer-feeding law in March, but Township Manager Alan Feit said that because it applies only to public land, it has not been effective.

Tamara Gund, fined $4,000 by Princeton, said this week that she had not intended to feed deer but had put feeders on her property for wild turkeys because "I like to see the chickies."

She said she paid the fine.

An article on deer management appeared in this month's publication of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. But Ginni Linn, editor of the monthly and spokeswoman for the 1,456-municipality association, said she knows of none with a deer-feeding ban.

Jerry Feaser, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, said he hasn't heard of any either.

"Preventing feeding is not effective by itself," he said, but is "an excellent first step."

The commission bans feeding only of bears and elk, Feaser said, as well as baiting for deer hunting.

Though no state law prohibits feeding deer for pleasure, Feaser said that "if someone continues to feed [deer] and bears continue to show up... that individual is liable to receive a citation."

Noting that there has been no count of the deer population, Feaser said that "we do discourage people from feeding wildlife, because that will lead to nuisance situations and in some cases accelerate the spread of wildlife-borne diseases."

"They're just growing the antlers, since the middle of September," Fest said. "We have the worst months ahead of us."

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8/21/05

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Outdoors

Outdoors: Commission hunting for ideas to manage urban deer

Sunday, August 21, 2005

By Ben Moyer

Pittsburgh and its suburbs may be the ideal example of urban deer problems. The hilly, wooded terrain, networked by older neighborhoods and spreading new development offer whitetails plenty of places to hide, and gardens and plantings to munch.

The dense development also provides them refuge from hunters. The herds grow larger, cross highways in heavy traffic and wear out their welcome with homeowners who once were thrilled to see a deer on their lawn.

To formulate a better urban deer program, the Pennsylvania Game Commission is now asking individuals, organizations and municipalities for ideas on managing deer in urban and suburban communities.

"The excessive whitetail populations in some Pennsylvania urban and suburban settings are living proof that you can have too much of a good thing," said Jeannine Tardiff, a Game Commission biologist heading up the project. Tardiff asked that hunters, homeowners, municipal officials and others consider the following points before submitting ideas to the agency.

- What are your primary concerns with urban/suburban deer?
- What methods would you support to manage urban/suburban deer problems?
- What actions do you believe would encourage landowners and community leaders to allow increased hunting access to small woodlots and other areas harboring deer in urban/suburban areas?

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- What actions are needed to encourage hunters to focus efforts in urban/suburban areas where increased harvest is needed?

Comments can be made by e-mail to urbandeer@pgc.state.pa.us or by mail to: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Attn: Draft Urban Deer Management Strategy, 2001 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, Pa., 17110-9797. Deadline for comments is Sept. 16.

An agency news release said possible management options are not limited to recreational hunting, and encouraged those considering comments to think creatively about the problem. Here are a couple of ideas that might fit that invitation.

Several years ago a Penn State professor, whose name now escapes me, was proposing a tactic to reduce roadkills in urban areas that made a lot of sense. Unfortunately, I have not seen his ideas implemented. His point was that deer were attracted to stabilization plantings on highway cuts and fills.

Too often, he said, fences to exclude deer from the road were placed at the outer edge of the plantings, at the edge of heavier cover. Attracted to the food, deer find a way to get over or under the fence, then wander onto the road. The professor advocated placing fences nearer to the highway and allowing deer access to the vegetation without crossing the fence. In that scenario the fence would still deter deer from crossing the road.

Another idea is to ask developers who build homes in formerly rural areas to share the cost of future deer problems. There are precedents for such an approach. Loggers, natural gas producers and coal operators buy bonds against the damage they may cause to municipal roads. Townships and boroughs can then retain the bond if the user defaults on his pledge to make repairs. Also, developers must construct streets to municipal specifications before the township assumes responsibility for their maintenance. The design and layout of new subdivisions can have a huge impact on their attractiveness to deer and on the accessibility of deer to hunters.

Municipalities could begin to incorporate anticipated deer problems into their design specifications. Or they could require developers of rural land to post a "deer damage bond" with the municipality, to defray future costs it will incur when deer begin to damage residents' property.

An agency spokesman said the goal is to reduce deer numbers to what managers call "cultural carrying capacity." Cultural carrying capacity is not what the habitat can support nutritionally, but what the community can tolerate in terms of damage.

Meanwhile, for those hunters who do have access to hunting property around the city, more than 60,000 antlerless deer licenses remain unsold

in Wildlife Management 2B, which includes Allegheny County and bordering portions of Butler, Beaver, Washington and Westmoreland counties. The Game Commission begins accepting applications for unsold licenses by mail tomorrow.

A deer in North Park ignores park goers while feeding on apples that have fallen on the ground. More and more deer are being found in urban areas.

By the numbers

Antlerless deer licenses available in Wildlife Management Units as of Aug. 18.

WMU	Allocation	Distributed	Remaining	Status
1A	40,000	24,888	15,112	Open
1B	27,000	27,000	0	Closed
2A	55,000	20,118	34,882	Open
2B	68,000	5,605	62,395	Open
2C	53,000	37,701	15,299	Open
2D	56,000	41,939	14,061	Open
2E	21,000	18,796	2,204	Open
2F	30,000	30,000	0	Closed
2G	29,000	29,000	0	Closed
3A	27,000	21,763	5,237	Open
3B	41,000	27,226	13,774	Open
3C	32,000	26,327	5,673	Open
3D	38,000	24,190	13,810	Open
4A	35,000	25,333	9,667	Open
4B	35,000	25,577	9,423	Open
4C	39,000	30,272	8,728	Open
4D	40,000	37,488	2,510	Open
4E	38,000	21,034	16,966	Open
5A	28,000	9,808	18,192	Open
5B	56,000	22,416	33,584	Open
5C	71,000	13,932	57,068	Open
5D	20,000	600	19,400	Open
Totals	879,000	521,013	357,987	

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Tom Kelley 2/26/06

From: Willy McKain
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2006 8:03 AM
To: Tom Kelley; Stephen Feller
Subject: Outdoors: Pennsylvania isn't the only state with a reduced deer herd

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Outdoors

Outdoors: Pennsylvania isn't the only state with a reduced deer herd

Sunday, February 26, 2006

By Ben Moyer

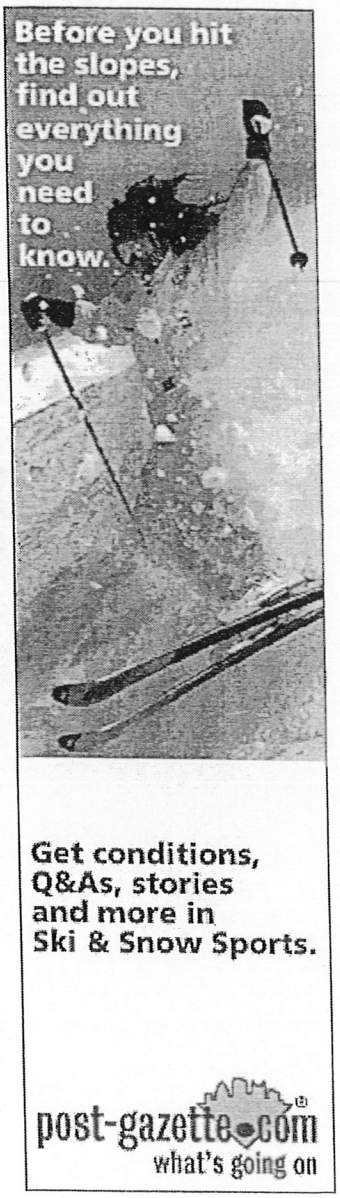
The phrase "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence" does not apply to deer hunting across state lines, at least not in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Mark Pummell, Associated Press
Two deer stand in a snow-covered field in Mercer County.
Click photo for larger image.

Many Pennsylvania deer hunters claim that deer management policies enacted here in recent years have needlessly reduced the deer herd to levels below their expectations. Some predict the deer kill statistics the Pennsylvania Game Commission will release next month will show a 2005 buck kill below 100,000. They could be right. But Pennsylvania isn't alone.

New York, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia all report declining buck kills in recent years. Data for 2005 is not yet available in Maryland or Virginia.

The trend is noteworthy because the buck kill is the best index of statewide deer population trends. Bag limits are more conservative on antlered deer and state wildlife departments seldom make radical changes to buck season schedule or length. Within a relatively fixed hunting format, a rising buck kill indicates a growing herd, while a declining take indicates the opposite.



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No states are more like Pennsylvania in topography, climate and land use than New York, Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia. The fact that hunters in all those states are tagging fewer bucks demonstrates that reducing deer herds is a goal of wildlife agencies throughout the region, and not unique to Pennsylvania.

New York hunters killed 89,000 bucks in 2005, about equal to 2004, but 18 percent lower than 2003.

"The recent declines in the deer take were a result of weather, hunting conditions in the field, and specific management actions intended to reduce deer populations from the high levels of 2002 and 2003 and bring populations closer to manageable levels in the many areas where deer were overabundant," New York Department of Environmental Conservation commissioner Denise Sheehan said after the 2004 hunt.

West Virginia's 2005 buck kill of 56,806 was 11 percent below the 2004 mark. As in New York, the decline results from deliberate management actions taken by the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources. "This year's deer harvest demonstrates the overall success of deer herd reduction efforts implemented in counties exceeding their population objectives," DNR director Frank Jezioro said. "We have made significant progress toward balancing the state's deer population with available habitat."

Virginia's 2004 season yielded 105,933 antlered bucks, 9 percent lower than the 2003 harvest. Hunters there killed a total of about 220,000 whitetails of both sexes.

Maryland is interesting, and more like Pennsylvania than many hunters assume. Maryland has extensive forests and public lands in the west, a mix of agriculture and woodland in central counties, and sprawling suburbs to the east. In 2004, Maryland hunters killed 7.5 percent more whitetails (the state also has non-native sika deer in its eastern lowlands) than in 2003.

The increase, however, was due to a deliberate effort to encourage hunters to take more antlerless deer. Maryland hunters killed 59,229 antlerless deer in 2004, a 20 percent jump. But the 34,639 bucks represented an 8 percent decline from the year before. Maryland managers are deliberately reducing the herd because high deer numbers have threatened forest ecology and agriculture.

Pennsylvania buck harvest statistics indicate that the state's deer herd grew rapidly in the 1990s. The hunting season format remained unchanged throughout the span but hunters here killed 20 percent more bucks in 1999 than in 1990. Meanwhile, the 1999 kill of antlerless deer in Pennsylvania (184,000) was 25 percent lower than in 1990, reflecting the protective policies toward antlerless deer at that time.

Since then Pennsylvania antlerless harvests have averaged about 300,000. Despite some claims that more aggressive management has rendered deer numbers "unhuntable," Pennsylvania deer hunters killed nine deer per square mile in 2004, more than any other state in the

Northeast.

The growing realization that large deer herds negatively impact a wide range of natural and social values is not confined to Pennsylvania. All across the Great Lakes, Mid-Atlantic and northeastern regions, state wildlife agencies have implemented deliberate management efforts to reduce white-tailed deer populations.

"Deer populations comparable to 2002 levels cannot be maintained without long-term negative consequences such as damage to agriculture, forest regeneration, landscaping or vehicle accidents," said New York DEC's commissioner Sheehan.

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8/23/06

REAL E

Mt. Lebanon considers deer hunting in parks

By Sara-Summer Wolf
for The Almanac
writer@thealmanac.net

Mt. Lebanon Commissioners have scheduled a public hearing Oct. 10 to discuss a deer "management" program that would kill deer in several municipal parks.

The commissioners met with Whitetail Management Associates in June to discuss a possible need for such a program. Whitetail Management is a group formed by Pennsylvania hunters intended to help control deer population in urban areas through controlled archery hunts. All hunters involved must complete a safety course, a background check, and all hunters must carry liability insurance. The hunters are given strict guidelines to follow, including areas where they are permitted to hunt. In the organization's nine year history, no accidents or injuries have been reported.

While Mt. Lebanon does experience some accidents due to deer each year, the number isn't nearly as high as other areas such as Upper St. Clair or Fox Chapel, both of whom have used Whitetail Management to help control the growing deer population in their areas. While Mt. Lebanon claims at least 40 deer-vehicular crashes each year, Upper St. Clair reported 207 in 2004.

Some areas targeted for the deer hunt are Twin Hills, Robb Hollow and Bird Park. The hunters would construct tree stands and shoot down at the deer. Hunts in neighboring townships occur in the early morning hours.

"No, it's not a safety issue. I think the primary concern in Mt. Lebanon is shrubs and people's property being destroyed," said Commissioner David Humphreys. "I've gotten a lot of demand from people for this to happen. I haven't gotten any calls from people saying don't do it."

Ronna Delitto is one resident who can see the effect of hungry deer every time she looks at where her flowers once were.

"I don't have flowers any more ... I like deer, but I think there needs to be a balance. There are too many deer in the area," said Delitto. "I'm in favor of a controlled hunt, only because I feel there needs to be more balance. The deer are starving in the winter."

Even if the majority of the feedback received by commissioners is in favor of this deer management program taking effect, not all in the community are on board with it.

"Deer have no place in a setting such as Mt. Lebanon, which in areas is more urban than suburban. If the purpose of the hunt is for population control or to prevent car accidents, I fully support the idea. However, if the purpose of the hunt is solely to preserve gardens, I don't believe that this aesthetic concern justifies the holding of the event," said Mt. Lebanon resident Jennifer Mecs.

With hunting season approaching, a controlled archery hunt is scheduled to begin at Upper St. Clair's Boyce Mayview Park. Residents should be aware that from dawn till dusk beginning Oct. 1 through Nov. 12, Nov. 28 through Dec. 10, and Dec. 27 through Jan. 14 a controlled hunt will be taking place while the park is open to the public.

10/16/06

South Neighborhoods

Mt. Lebanon ready to declare war on its biggest pest

Thursday, November 16, 2006

By Laura Pace, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Go ahead, light a few candles, put some logs on the fire and turn on the Barry White tunes. Right now, outside your window, the deer are making doe-eyes at each other and jumping hoof-first into the rutting season.

But there's also a cacophonous side to the nature of nature. Such, er, distraction has increased the number of deer-related car accidents and destroyed shrubbery in the South Hills.

The issue is about to come to a head in Mt. Lebanon, as agricultural experts butt heads with activists who say killing deer is cruel and will only make the problem worse.

Jim Mendenhall, Post-Gazette

A young buck visits a Mt. Lebanon back yard last month.

Click photo for larger image.

Still, sharpshooters aiming to thin the herds could be in place by January, augmented by archers next fall.

Mt. Lebanon has taken its time deliberating. Over the past two years, commissioners have heard many complaints during public hearings from people on both sides of the fence. They have discussed allowing controlled bow hunts and using sharpshooters to thin a herd estimated at 15 per square mile, a large number for a residential area, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Representatives of the USDA will be at the Mt. Lebanon commissioners meeting at 8 p.m. Nov. 27 in the municipal building to present a deer management plan it has prepared for the town.

Commissioner Barbara Logan hopes to vote on the plan that night. She is a proponent of an organized hunt in hopes of quelling the hundreds of complaints she hears.

"The numbers have to be contained," she said of the deer, noting the biggest concern for her are the traffic accidents. "I think we have to become strong, big people and recognize that they are a hazard on the street."

She said she had a herd of deer in her back yard recently, at dusk, and they almost matched the color of the air. But even more worrisome is they did not seem afraid of her.

"My shouting and screaming at them does nothing," she said.

She said she gets several complaints a week from people who are tired of the deer eating plants.

Ravin' on up

Mt. Lebanon Public Works Director Thomas Kelley said the problem was that the deer in

Pennsylvania have no natural predators. Further, they have eaten a lot of the "understory," or the layer of food closest to the ground, so they are moving on to more populated areas, where ornamental shrubs provide an easy, ample treat.

Oth[illegible]s say suburban sprawl and overbuilding in the natural habitat is forcing them into cities and suburbs.

Mt. Lebanon reports about 40 deer-related car accidents a year, with that number growing. While none of them has been fatal, municipal officials worry that it is just a matter of time.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission requires any town that wants to eliminate deer to have a deer management plan, which lays out all the ways the deer will be culled, and it includes maps and cost, Mr. Kelley said.

Mt. Lebanon paid the USDA $3,300 for its plan, which is expected to be finished this week.

Mr. Kelley expects that it will suggest culling in the parks and, possibly, on the perimeter of the municipal golf course on Pine Avenue. He expects some combination of archery and sharpshooters to thin the herd.

But first, the town would have to modify its ordinance that prohibits hunting there. That change would probably be very specific and apply only to a municipal hunt, Mr. Kelley said. Then the town would have to apply for a state permit for the hunt.

If approved, the hunt could allow archers from Whitetail Management Associates to hunt, although those hunters prefer the autumn, and that opportunity probably would have passed th[illegible]year. There would be no cost for Whitetail Management to do the bow hunt, and hunters pr[illegible]ably would be local people, according to the group's proposal to Mt. Lebanon. Each hunter would be required to have $1 million in liability insurance and would be responsible for each arrow, which is numbered.

The sharpshooters prefer snow on the ground, he said. They probably would bait the deer in an open area, where they would be shot. The hunters would be required to be at least 150 yards from any structure.

Both groups would target doe and would work within each state-approved hunting season, Mr. Kelley said.

Cost could be dear

The cost is unknown, but Mr. Kelley has heard estimates of from $91 to $310 a deer, although he also has heard costs can climb to $1,000 to $1,500 a deer, depending on how effective the plan is. If hunters go out day after day and don't see any deer and spend money and time baiting, the cost goes up.

He would like to see about half the Mt. Lebanon deer population eliminated.

While some people have advocated birth control, Mr. Kelley said, it is not feasible.

"From everything that we've seen, it is too expensive. It is not practical," he said, noting the [illegible] would have to be tagged because the meat cannot be eaten. The town also might have some liability if the deer leaves the town and is eaten by someone who doesn't know it has been injected. Mr. Kelley said they wouldn't know what effect that tainted venison would

have on a pregnant woman and her unborn child, for example.

Proponents of deer contraception, in educational materials sent to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, insist the method is workable. Further, the groups assert that, because the Pennsylvania Game Commission is supported by money from hunting licenses, the group is not impartial and cannot rule fairly on the issue.

Continuing South Hills issue

The emotional debate is nothing new to the South Hills. After intense community discussions, Upper St. Clair began permitting Whitetail Management Associates to conduct archery hunts in 1998, resulting in 34 to 67 deer kills a year, with a total of 282 harvested between 1998 and 2004.

The matter even ended up on a referendum, winning overwhelming approval, Senior Assistant Township Manager Mark Mansfield said.

Still, township officials did not believe that hunt helped with deer-related car accidents on Route 19, where about 50 percent of the deer accidents occurred. In fact, the town had seen climbing deer-traffic accident numbers, from 94 in 1994, to 157 in 2003, leading the township to augment bow hunting with sharpshooting.

Birth control was ruled out, according to the town's 2003 deer management report, after consulting with the Humane Society of the United States and hearing information from deer contraception expert Jay Kirkpatrick. The report said 75 percent of the females would have to be treated, and that would require entering private property. Booster doses would be required at a cost of $250 to $500 per deer each year, and they would have to tag each one to ensure that meat would not be eaten.

Since the USDA sharpshooters began, they bagged 117 deer last year and 147 this year, with next year scheduled to be the third consecutive year. The shooters use medium-caliber rifles for the shots, most of which are at close range. They have many rules, such as they can shoot a deer only when there is a backstop. Most times, the bullet does not exit the animal, Mr. Mansfield said.

More importantly, Mr. Mansfield said, there have been no problems with the hunts and traffic accidents have not increased at the pace they were projected to. There were 175 traffic accidents last year, when the numbers were projected to be closer to 250, he said. This year, there have been 82 accidents.

Upper St. Clair spends about $20,000 a year on its plan, which culls deer on township property and certain private property when owners have initiated the process and agreed to the hunt.

Bethel Park police Chief John Mackey said Whitetail Management Associates had been doing a bow hunt there for 10 years, killing about 60 deer a year, the majority of them, does. Authorized areas include parts of South Park and Simmons Park.

"Very rarely, we'll get a complaint," he said, noting most of the complaints are that an unauthorized person is hunting. Whitetail Management hunters have turned in hunters who are not their representatives, he said.

He said the town gets complaints at the time Whitetail Management's hunting contract is

renewed, but that once the contract is up and running again and the controversy is over, the complaints stop.

Th[illegible]own has looked at sharpshooters, but "I wouldn't recommend that," Chief Mackey said, no[illegible]g it would be bad if the sharpshooter were a police officer and something bad happened, even though he knows there are precautions.

"I just think it's too risky," he said.

Ms. Logan said she understood that some people are upset at the thought of killing deer, but whether they die from old age, disease, hunger or hunting, "One way or another, the deer are going to die."

(Laura Pace can be reached at lpace@post-gazette.com or 412-851-1867.)

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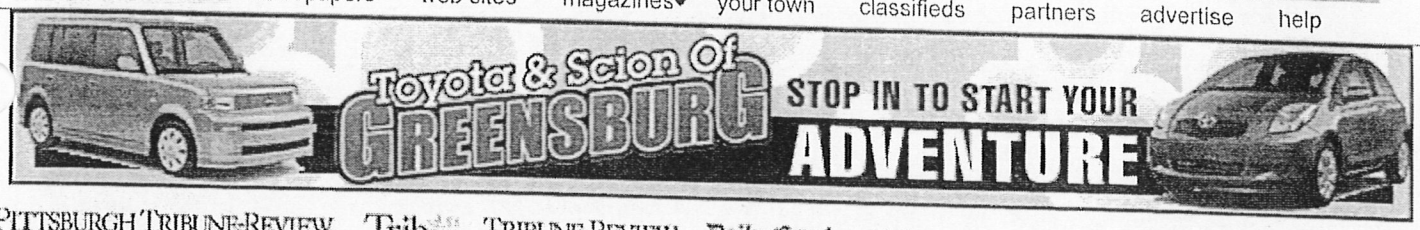

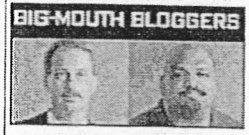

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Mt. Lebanon may start culling deer

By Andrew Johnson
TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Saturday, November 4, 2006

Deer are so pervasive in Mt. Lebanon that resident Thomas M. Brown has taken to naming the ones he sees over and over, including "Limpy," the deer with the broken leg.

While driving on three occasions, Brown also nearly hit a deer.

"I've had several close calls," said Brown, 57, who supports a proposed "controlled hunt" to reduce the number of deer.

If municipal commissioners agree, deer culling -- in which officials with the U.S. Department of Agriculture use food to lure deer to a designated area and then shoot them -- could begin in January, Public Works Director Thomas G. Kelley said.

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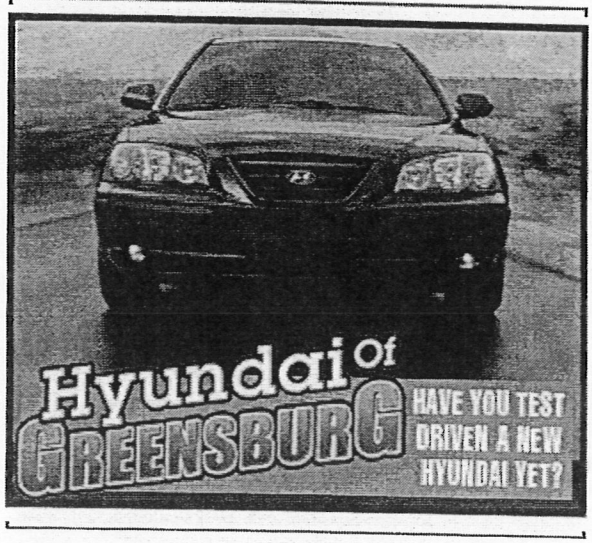

At the Nov. 27 municipal meeting, Mt. Lebanon leaders will discuss a final deer management report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services Division.

"There's a cost associated with it, no doubt," Kelley said about a deer culling program. The per-deer charge is anywhere from $91 to $310, paid for by taxpayers, he said.

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But Kelly said at least two residents have contracted Lyme disease, and he receives an average of three phone calls per week with complaints about fearless, shrub-eating deer.

Special deer hunting permits are available to municipalities that want to reduce herds, said Jerry Feaser, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Shaler, Fox Chapel and Upper St. Clair already have such hunts underway, but Mt. Lebanon typically does not allow hunting because no part of town has the state-required amount of open space, Feaser said.

There are 15 deer per square mile in Mt. Lebanon, said Craig Swope, a USDA local district supervisor, who is working on Mt. Lebanon's report. An ideal population would be three per square mile, he said.

"Take an aerial picture of Mt. Lebanon, and you will see very little deer habitat," Swope said. That's the reason why people are seeing so many deer on roads and in backyards, he said.

Officials in towns that have held controlled deer hunts say they work.

The proof is in the numbers, said Mark S. Mansfield, senior assistant township manager for Upper St. Clair.

The township had a record 207 accidents in 2004. It began a $20,000 annual deer-culling program the next year.

So far this year, Upper St. Clair has recorded 82 deer-vehicle accidents, Mansfield said. "The rates are starting to normalize back to 2000 numbers," he said.

Fox Chapel has used two tactics to control deer herds for 15 years.

Police Chief David Laux and one of his officers shoot deer from January to April, and bow hunting is allowed from October to January.

"Nobody even knows we're there," said Joe McCluskey Jr., of Cheswick, president of Whitetail Management Associates, which provides bow hunting services to communities, parks and country clubs. "We design the rules so that we're invisible."

In 1993, there were 81 deer-vehicle accidents in Fox Chapel, Laux said. Last year, there were 19, he said.

Despite such success elsewhere, Mt. Lebanon's Kelley said doubters and critics remain. He said some ask, "How could you a kill a deer?"

Chris Karwowski, 26, of Mt. Lebanon, is a deer hunter, but he doesn't like the idea of killing deer in town.

"I think it's a little too residential of an area," said Karwowski, a restaurant manager at Molly Brannigans on Washington Road.

"You look around here and there's nothing but residential houses and development. I would never dream about hunting here," he said.

Andrew Johnson can be reached at ajohnson@tribweb.com or 412-380-5632.

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11/16/06

Couple severely injured in deer attack

Thursday, November 16, 2006

By Lillian Thomas, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When state police responded to a call about an aggressive deer at a rural Clinton County home yesterday morning, they figured the creature would be long gone.

Instead, they found a six-point whitetail buck straddling a screaming woman in her back yard, repeatedly goring her face, neck and chest. A man lay near by, with multiple wounds, in and out of consciousness.

Cpl. Todd A. Brian and Trooper Stephen E. Wilcox of the Lamar barracks in the north central Pennsylvania county responded to a 911 call at 7:40 a.m. The caller was a woman who said a buck had blocked her door so that she could not leave the house to feed her cats, then attacked her housemate who went to shoo the deer away.

"She was inside at the time. We responded, assuming by the time we got there the deer would be gone," said Cpl. Brian.

When they arrived, five or six minutes after the 911 call, "we pull up, and immediately hear her screaming. There's a lot of equipment, farm machinery, rubble all around this house, and we weren't sure where she was at. We split up -- we were trying to find her, assuming she was screaming because of injuries to him.

"But I get to the back yard and find her pinned to the ground by a large buck. He had his front feet straddling her, one on each side of her torso."

The buck was goring the woman in the chest, neck and face, he said.

"Obviously I had to do something to stop it. But even from 8 or 10 feet I didn't want to shoot the deer -- his upper body was right down by her chest. And I wasn't sure exactly where Trooper Wilcox was. So I picked up the left horn, I pulled it toward me on the left side and that got the buck up high enough off her that I could get a shot. I immediately started shooting it in the chest. It took off and ran almost directly into Trooper Wilcox," who had come around from a different side of the house. "He shot it several more times and put it down."

The victims, Linda Yost and Frank Rishel, have lived together on the rural property for many years, Cpl. Brian said. He said he believed Mr. Rishel is in his 60s and Ms. Yost in her 50s.

The victims were badly injured -- "you have six big bony points like that, that keep driving into someone's face," said Cpl. Brian. "Both had multiple puncture wounds, gore wounds and severe facial injuries." Ms. Yost's eyes were badly injured.

The troopers wanted to transport Mr. Rishel and Ms. Yost by medical helicopter, but fog made that impossible. They were taken to Lock Haven Hospital. A hospital spokeswoman said she was not at liberty to release any information.

Pennsylvania Game Commission officials were investigating the apparently unprovoked attack.

A commission worker took the carcass away. Although the buck appeared healthy, if will be ch ed for rabies and other diseases. Cpl. Brian said game officers told him they find two or three rabid deer every year.

"I've never seen anything like it. Nor had the local game officer," said Cpl. Brian. "It's not something you train for."

Commission employee Kenneth Packard noted that deer are in the midst of the rut, which is the fall mating season, and for whatever reason, the buck chose to spar with these people.

"That is not behavior normally associated with wild deer, as they almost invariably keep their distance from people," a commission news release said.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the immediate response and action of Cpl. Brian and Trooper Wilcox saved the lives of the two victims," said Warren "Quig" Stump, Northcentral Region Law Enforcement supervisor for the state game commission.

(Lillian Thomas can be reached at lthomas@post-gazette.com or 412-263-3566.)

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Mt. Lebanon reviews deer management options

Almanac 1/17/2007

By Sara-Summer Wolf
For The Almanac
writer@thealmanac.net

The question of what is the right way to address the deer issue in Mt. Lebanon continued Jan. 8, as commissioners talked to Dr. Jay Kilpatrick regarding alternate fertility control options.

According to Dr. Kilpatrick, the contraceptive is about $21 per dose, plus an additional $1.50 for each dart used to inject the deer. There is also an additional cost of flying individuals to Montana to train them on how to handle the vaccine, the legal issues concerning the vaccine, and how to deal with different types of scenarios.

This option would pose some other obstacles, such as keeping track of which deer have already been given the contraceptive. This sort of contraceptive was originally intended for wild horses, but was found to be effective on deer as well.

While this may be the case, Dr. Kilpatrick expressed that this is an area he no longer seeks to be involved with.

"I don't do much with deer contraceptive anymore, because it has become such a political nightmare...The issues, the turmoil, the debate is all social, political, cultural, and economic, but it is not scientific. This method works. There are no scientific issues," said Dr. Kilpatrick.

Like other forms of deer management, the contraceptive would need to be done on a yearly basis. Also, Dr. Kilpatrick could not give a firm estimate of how long it would take to see a reduction in the deer population, since each herd is different.

Earlier this year, the USDA's Wildlife Service conducted a survey of the deer population in Mt. Lebanon. They found approximately 15 deer per square mile. The recommended number of deer for this type of community is one to three deer per square mile.

Craig Swope from the USDA was also at the meeting to go over details of a draft agreement as the municipality looks at moving forward with its original plan for a culling program.

It would include eight nights of shooting in park areas, or private residential areas if a resident requests that action be taken there, it would be a one year contract, although typically the process takes place in January and February. A biologist would come and study the area being considered to determine what areas are best, and then the shooting would take place between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

The police department and game commission are typically notified a few hours prior to the cull. It is done from a vehicle stand with what they consider a safe backdrop. However, not all residents agreed with the definition of safe.

"I'm assuming you are all aware that it is 150 yard safety zone regulation for firearms in Pennsylvania. When I look at these buffer zones that are laid out in the parks, I was absolutely shocked, because most of the buffer zones were only 10 or 20 yards. So I'm wondering where we are missing the point that it is 150 yards buffer zones out in the major woods, but we are now saying that 10, 20 yard buffer zones are safe," said resident George Nagle.

In August, Mt. Lebanon commissioners contracted with the USDA to prepare a deer management plan. This is required by the Pennsylvania Game Commission as part of the process for requesting a deer population control permit. The cost to prepare this plan was $3,300.

The plan calls for a number of steps to be taken. Some of the non-lethal actions include preparing educational materials for residents with information on urban deer and steps that can be taken to reduce property damage, collecting data on areas prone to deer-vehicle accidents so speed limits and signage can be changed to meet the needs, and continued density surveys to track population trends.

The plan also recommends identifying safe locations for a controlled archery hunt by Whitetail Management Associates.

In addition to the controll hunt, the plan recommen sharp shooting over bait at nig to trap and kill the deer. The pe mit from the PA Game Commi sion would call for the removal no more than 75 deer per yea and all the meat would processed and donated for h man consumption.

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2/1/07

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Deer shooting to begin without public notice

Thursday, February 01, 2007

By Laura Pace, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

In Mt. Lebanon, it's all over but the shooting.

The municipality will have sharpshooters from the Wildlife Services division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture begin to cull the deer herd within the next two weeks. Residents will not be notified, but municipal officials have said they have taken steps to ensure public safety.

After two years of public debate, hearings, proposals and complaints about too many deer eating shrubs and causing traffic accidents, Mt. Lebanon commissioners voted in January to approve a $19,999 contract with the USDA for this year to allow eight days of shooting, from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the public parks, public works director Tom Kelley said.

Commissioner Keith Mulvihill voted against the contract because he's not satisfied that it will be safe.

"I'm concerned about the safety of coordinating that kind of program in parks the size of our parks," he said. "I do think there's going to be some risk with this."

An application for a cull permit was submitted to the State Game Commission and Mr. Kelley expected to receive the permit at any time.

While Mt. Lebanon police will be notified about four hours in advance of any shooting, residents will not be, in order to avoid any interference from groups that oppose the effort. Trails through parks also will not be marked in advance.

A group of people has been following the matter with several objections, including worries about public safety.

Mr. Kelley said the effort was not called a hunt, as the shooters are specially trained professionals and are not just recreational hunters. They will not track deer or chase them through the town. Instead, they will set out bait in specially approved areas for several nights before the shoot in hopes of luring the deer to the spots.

The deer will be shot using night-vision apparatus, preferably as they eat. The shots will be from above, with the high-powered rifle aimed toward the ground in the event of a miss. Shots will be aimed at the head and neck using soft bullets that expand in order to be more deadly and to try to avoid a ricochet, he said.

"It's a debilitating shot. It will bring the deer down," Mr. Kelley said, noting the guns will have silencers on them.

If the shooter hits the deer but does not kill it, the shooter will follow the animal and administer another shot. For this reason, the USDA probably will shoot on days when there is snow to help tracking.

In a public meeting several weeks ago, Craig B. Swope, district supervisor and wildlife biologist with the USDA, said the sharpshooters had never wounded a deer without killing it immediately. He said they had never injured a person or pet in the process.

Deer will be dressed on-site, the carcass will be removed using a sled and the meat will be sent to food banks, Mr. Kelley said.

In the next few days, officials from the USDA will tour the town with the police department in hope of selecting shooting areas that are safe, with a natural backstop in case the bullet does go through the animal or misses. They will make use of hills and ravines and will not be firing toward homes.

Earlier reports that the shooters would be firing into the parks from trucks have been revised as that method probably isn't feasible, Mr. Kelley said.

There is no required buffer zone between the shooting areas and homes or yards, Mr. Kelley said. While the Game Commission has a required buffer zone between hunters and homes, culling is not considered a hunt and is not subject to those limitations, he said.

"They are able, and will, in fact, hunt right up to occupied structures," Mr. Mulvihill said. "They're still using high-powered weapons in a pretty confined area."

The contract allows the staff to use a box trap to catch the deer for shooting. Mr. Kelley said that, while the shooters will look for doe, it is possible they will kill bucks.

The Mt. Lebanon deer herd was estimated at 15 animals per square mile, with the optimum number being one to three per square mile. A maximum of 75 deer would be killed according to the plan.

While commissioners gathered information about contraception and other population control measures, the board decided on the shooters.

Commissioner Dale Colby said he was satisfied that the plan is safe, but that he thought the municipality had to communicate better with its residents.

"I'm OK with what is going to [happen], but I'm not OK that the public totally understands what the safety measures are," he said, noting he didn't think the municipality's fact sheet on the culling explained everything it needed to.

Upper St. Clair is the nearest town that uses sharpshooters, in addition to Fox Chapel.

Mr. Kelley said in the event of an accident, Mt. Lebanon's insurance would handle any claims.

The deer management plan and implementation fact sheet are available at www.mtlebanon.org.

(Laura Pace can be reached at lpace@post-gazette.com or 412-851-1867.)

Back

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strong enough action has been taken to alert the public as to what is planned, or the risks involved. As a result, they have formed their own group to take action in keeping the residents of Mt. Lebanon safe.

"If you go on the Web site, it is not user-friendly and everyone I spoke to today said they don't go to the Web site, so that is not a reliable source information for the public. We are not going to stand by this poorly thought out decision that they've made...We started the Coalition for

SEE DEER PAGE A5

2/21/07

BY SARA SUMMER WOLF

IN BIRD PARK opposing the deer hunt is Sandraluz Lara-Cinisomo.

❑ Deer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

Neighborhood Safety and Awareness. We are trying to get more informed, and inform the public. Basically we are doing the commissioners' job at this point," said Sandraluz Lara-Cinisomo, cofounder of the Coalition.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission completed its review of Mt. Lebanon's Deer Management Plan and should be issuing a permit within five working days.

In a phone interview with Feller held Feb. 20, he was uncertain whether Mt. Lebanon has received the permit. Kelley was unavailable at press time for comment on the permit status.

Rally protests deer hunt

2/21/07

By Sara-Summer Wolf
For The Almanac
writer@thealmanac.net

Four deer strolling through Bird Park at dusk on Feb. 19 appeared to be leading the procession of protesters carrying signs and chanting for Mt. Lebanon officials to "stop the hunt" scheduled to take place.

Approximately two dozen protesters met peacefully to voice their opposition to a recent decision by commissioners to implement a deer management plan that calls for the use of high-powered rifles in several Mt. Lebanon parks. Residents can request hunters kill the animals in their yard. So far, a dozen residents have requested the sharpshooters on their property.

"This is a protest in support of public safety so parks stay safe...We want to make sure that lethal weapons are stopped in Mt. Lebanon. ...These parks are ringed by houses, child care centers, schools, churches and none of our urban parks are safe for hunting. Deer can be managed in ways that are safe," said Mt. Lebanon resident Kimberly Schevtchuk.

Earlier this year, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Service conducted a survey of the deer population in Mt. Lebanon, and then entered into a contract at a cost of $19,999 for the USDA animal and plant health service wildlife services to cull the deer population using high-powered rifles.

The vote passed 4-1, with Commissioner Keith Mulvihill voting against it, and Commissioner Dale Colby requesting that the public be informed of safety measures and procedures regarding the culling.

"If you go on our Web site, you'll see a copy of the safety procedures taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture," said Municipal Manager Stephen Feller.

FROM PAGE A1

Mt. Lebanon deer hunt imminent

By Sara-Summer Wolf
For The Almanac
writer@thealmanac.net

Culling of deer in Mt. Lebanon could begin at any time, however, residents will not be notified when the shooting will take place in municipal parks.

Mt. Lebanon Public Works Director Tom Kelley told commissioners Feb. 12 that the Pennsylvania Game Commission has completed its review of Mt. Lebanon's "Deer Management Plan" and political subdivision permit application, and should be issuing a permit in the next five working days.

Earlier this year, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA's) Wildlife Service conducted a survey of the deer population in Mt. Lebanon. They found approximately 15 deer per square mile. The recommended number of deer for this type of community is one to three deer per square mile.

The municipality then entered into a contract at a cost of $19,999 for the USDA animal and plant health service wildlife services to cull the deer population using high powered rifles.

Kelley presented the commissioners with information outlining the safety procedures laid out in the plan, along with a directive put out by the USDA animal and plant health inspection service regarding wildlife services firearm use and safety.

Prior to conducting the actual cull, a member of the wildlife service along with a member of the municipal employee will visit all of the park areas to determine which areas are the safest to shoot. An area requires a sufficient backdrop away from houses, schools or any other occupied structure to ensure shooting can be done in a safely, discreetly and efficiently.

In areas where culling is deemed necessary but shooting is thought unsafe, live capture traps will be used. Once the deer have been captured, they will then be euthanized.

While parks are the main focus of the cull, some residents want something to be done about the deer in their own backyards.

"I've had probably in the last week seven to 10 phone calls from different residents throughout the community requesting that the services be provided on their property," said Kelley.

Before any shooting takes place, the Mt. Lebanon Police Department will be notified and inform them when field operations are planned. However, this information is not shared with the public to avoid protests from those opposed to the use of such force in the community.

The plan calls for the cull to occur over eight days, although not necessarily consecutively. Shooting will take place between the hours of 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. Monday through Friday. Further safety measures that will be taken include use of suppressed rifles with high expansion ammunition, use of elevated stands, vehicles, artificial light, night vision equipment and forward looking infrared lighting.

Despite the information being posted on the Web site, some residents feel these measures are not nearly enough to protect residents.

"I think that is really a joke as far as a safety notification. I think the only reason they are doing that is because [Commissioner Dale] Colby put the clause in the resolution. The other issue is these commissioners authorized a bunch of guys shooting high powered rifles from vehicles with no notification," said resident George Nagle.

All of the safety information is available on the municipality's Web site.

4/4/07

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Mt. Lebanon group looks to commissioners to st deer culls

By Brian C. Rittmeyer
TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Wednesday, April 4, 2007

After failing to stop a deer-culling program in Mt. Lebanon, a residents group is turning its attention to three commission races.

The Coalition for Neighborhood Safety & Awareness hopes to work with commissioners to find nonlethal ways to control the deer population, said co-founder Sandraluz Lara-Cinisomo. Commissioners will be elected in the 1st, 3rd and 5th wards.

Lara-Cinisomo said the group, which claims 30 families as members, chose to take a political approach rather than pursue a court injunction to stop the deer kill. She said the group will begin operating a Web site -- www.cnsa-mtlebo.org -- later this week.

"We're hoping we can negotiate with the candidates who are running to try to address the deer issue in a nonlethal way," she said. "Now is an opportunity for us to build a team approach rather than a divisive approach."

- ADVERTISEMENT -

Sharpshooters with the U.S. Department of Agriculture killed 68 deer over seven nights of shooting in February and March in the municipality's parks, said Public Works Director Tom Kelley. The venison was donated to food banks.

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The state Game Commission is allowing Mt. Lebanon to kill up to 77 deer, Kelley said. Twenty-five property owners are allowing traps to be set on their property this week. Kelley said reducing the deer population would reduce their impact on the environment. "It's going to hopefully prevent vehicle-deer collisions" as well, he said.

Kelley said no injuries or mishaps were reported during the shoots. He said police received four calls, including two from Castle Shannon residents, about gunshots.

Opponents complained the municipality did not give people advance notice of where and when shoots would happen. The municipality said shoots took place from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., when the parks are closed to the public.

"We know there are a lot of people very concerned about this issue," Lara-Cinisomo said. "We encourage them to sign up and make calls to the commissioners and candidates and ask what their position is," she said.

Brian C. Rittmeyer can be reached at brittmeyer@tribweb.com or (724) 779-7108.

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4/5/07

South Neighborhoods

Sixty-eight deer taken in culling; outcome pleases officials

Thursday, April 05, 2007

By Laura Pace, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Sharpshooters for the U.S. Department of Agriculture have virtually wrapped up their cull in Mt. Lebanon, with 68 deer taken over seven days since February.

In a summary given to Mt. Lebanon Public Works Director Tom Kelley, the USDA tallies list the kill totals as: seven adult males, 14 juvenile males, 30 adult females and 17 juvenile females.

Six of those deer were injured, probably by cars, fences or other events, and were shot as part of the cull, Mr. Kelley said.

"It went exceptionally well," said Craig B. Swope, a district supervisor and wildlife biologist with the USDA. "I could not have dreamed of a better outcome."

Locations of the deer shootings include: one along Gilkeson Road (an injured deer); 11 in Hoodridge Park; one in Iroquois Park; four in Main Park; four in McNeilly Park; 18 on private property; 10 in Robb Hollow Park; two in Rockwood Park and four in Williamsburg Park.

Those numbers differ slightly from information given in mid-March, but Mr. Kelley said this is the official record from the USDA.

Some trapping on private property still continues but that is expected to wrap up this week, he said. The USDA is permitted to take up to nine more deer through trapping, as the state permit allowed 77 deer to be killed. Twenty-five home-owners requested the service on their property. When sharpshooters cannot be used because of safety, the deer are trapped and shot on site.

Mr. Kelley said his office received complaint calls about hearing the shots. The rifles use high expansion ammunition, the sound of which can be suppressed but not totally silenced, he said. It's possible that only 60 percent of the sound is muffled and on a humid night, shots can be more easily heard, he said.

"People did hear, that's for sure," he said.

Similar complaints were lodged with Mt. Lebanon police.

Neither police nor the public works office received any reports of injuries to people or pets.

"[The shooters] performed as they told us they would," Mr. Kelley said.

Mr. Swope said Mt. Lebanon was one of the more urbanized areas in which the USDA has culled, with a tight density of homes.

But still, the shooters were able to kill every deer they intended to without any problems, he

said, although in several instances, a second shot from a handgun was required to stop the deer's nerve activity after death.

He could recall two instances where bullets completely missed an intended deer, but those bullets went into the ground, as the shooters are required to shoot downward toward the deer, with a dirt backstop in case of a miss.

Throughout the cull, a handful of residents continued to attend municipal commission meetings to oppose the shooting mostly on safety reasons. Some were opposed to the killing of deer, some were concerned that children walking through the parks would be in danger and others were upset that residents weren't notified of hunt dates and times. Local police, however, were notified.

"No one has seen us take a deer. It's been 100 percent safe," Mr. Swope said. "We fulfilled the goals and we did it 100 percent safely. Even though people didn't believe us, it can be done."

Deer killed were sent to food banks.

Once the trapping is finished, the $19,999 contract will be done for the year. Commissioners could choose to renew it next year.

Mr. Kelley said the USDA's estimate of 90 deer in Mt. Lebanon's six square miles may have been low. Even with nearly 70 animals shot, "There's still a lot of deer," he said.

(Laura Pace can be reached at lpace@post-gazette.com or 412-851-1867.)

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5/30/07

South Neighborhoods

Deer attacks, stomps pet dog in Mt. Lebanon

Incident is third reported to authorities in South Hills in past two weeks

Wednesday, May 30, 2007

By Linda Wilson Fuoco, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

A dog that was attacked and stomped by a deer yesterday morning in Mt. Lebanon was in stable condition last night, but will have surgery today.

Randy, a wheaten terrier-mix who is blind and elderly, was attacked by a deer in his back yard on Theodan Drive, according to neighbors and police.

Mt. Lebanon animal control officers took Randy, who was bleeding heavily, to VCA Castle Shannon Animal Hospital shortly after the 9:10 a.m. attack. Last night a spokesman at the veterinary hospital said that in the last two weeks the staff has treated three dogs that were attacked by deer.

One of the other victims was Bailey, 7-year-old beagle, that was chased and stomped by a deer near Stoltz Road in Bethel Park on Friday. Michael Larkin said his family's pet is recovering.

In the Mt. Lebanon attack, a neighbor called police to report that a deer accompanied by fawns entered a yard in the 1700 block of Theodan Drive. Two dogs were in the yard, contained by an invisible fence. The deer attacked one of the dogs.

"The neighbor said the dogs are older and apparently couldn't maneuver too well. The deer cornered one of the dogs and stomped on it," said Mt. Lebanon police Lt. Ken Truver.

The owner of the dogs was not home at the time of the attack, and could not be reached for comment last night.

Another neighbor was taking her garbage to the curb yesterday morning when she saw Randy walking slowing on the sidewalk. She was surprised to see him outside the yard.

"Then I noticed he was dripping a trail of blood and his chest was torn open," said Elfriede Belsterling. Neighbors brought out water and towels to stop the bleeding, and police and animal control were summoned.

Last night a spokesman at the clinic said that Randy's condition had been upgraded to stable but he was expected to undergo surgery today. No further details were available.

The attack in Bethel Park was different.

"Bailey is a beagle and she does occasionally chase wild animals," Mr. Larkin said. "It was prom night and a lot of people were at our house to take pictures."

A neighbor brought Bailey to the Larkin residence.

"She said Bailey was running out of the woods and a deer was chasing our dog," Mr. Larkin said. "The deer swatted Bailey with its foot, knocking her down. When Bailey was down on the ground, the deer stomped on her, two times."

At VCA Castle Shannon, the staff said it had treated a dog attacked by a deer just a week earlier, Mr. Larkin said.

Lt. Truver said he is not aware of any other reports in Mt. Lebanon of deer attacking pets, but said "animal control officers say that at this time of year deer have fawns and will act protectively toward them."

A spokesman at the Pennsylvania Game Commission said female deer will be aggressive in the spring when they have young fawns.

(Linda Wilson Fuoco can be reached at lfuoco@post-gazette.com or 412-263-3064.)

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MT. LEBANON
PENNSYLVANIA

8/2007

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mt. Lebanon to Hold Deer Management Meeting

Mt. Lebanon residents are invited to comment on the municipality's deer management program at a public meeting to be held 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 26, in the Commission Chamber of the Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building, 710 Washington Road.

Last year, at Mt. Lebanon's request, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducted a study that concluded that the number of deer in the community exceeded the local "carrying capacity." Mt. Lebanon then contracted with the USDA to reduce the size of the herd using certified USDA sharpshooters.

At the September 27 meeting, Craig Swope of the USDA will discuss the agency's final report on last year's program and make recommendations.

A public comment session will follow. Commissioners hope to hear from residents who were satisfied with last season's effort, as well as from residents who have concerns or wish to suggest ways in which the deer management program might be improved. In the interest of time, comments will be limited to five minutes per speaker.

The USDA report is posted at ***www.mtlebanon.org.***

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Deer strategy angers some ML residents

9/2007

by Sara-Summer Wolf
For The Almanac
writer@thealmanac.net

Some Mt. Lebanon residents are angry and frustrated as they search for answers regarding major changes to the municipality's deer management plan.

This past winter Mt. Lebanon conducted its first culling of deer in the township. This step came after the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Service was hired by the municipality to estimate the deer population in Mt. Lebanon. They found approximately 15 deer per square mile. The recommended number of deer for this size community is one to three deer per square mile, according to the USDA.

Over a six-week period from Feb. 28 until April 4, the USDA killed 69 deer, including 31 fawn and 38 adults. Many of those females were pregnant, accounting for 56 fetuses also removed. The most recent plan from the USDA, however, recommends much higher figures.

According to the Wildlife Services Activities Summary Report, "Wildlife Services recommends that the municipality continue deer removal operations in 2007-2008 to work toward a deer density near or at two to five deer per square mile. Future removal efforts will most likely require a minimum of 12 nights of shooting and eight nights of trapping, targeting 150 deer in 2007-2008."

The plan would call for eight nights of baiting the deer, and 12 nights of shooting beginning in early December.

Some residents take issue with this recommendation, however. According to some, other than the culling, the municipality has taken no further steps to ensure the safety of residents when it comes to deer.

"If everyone is at such risk that we have to kill them in order to be safe, why aren't we marking the areas where the deer are," said resident Barbara Sollenberger at the Oct. 8 commission meeting.

> What is our goal? Are we trying to eradicate every deer in Mt. Lebanon.'
>
> *Keith Mulvihill, Mt. Lebanon commissioner*

On Sept. 26 Mt. Lebanon sponsored a public hearing to allow residents to hear the recommendations of the USDA and offer public comment.

Not all residents are against the plan, though. So far, approximately 60 residents have requested that culling take place on their property.

"We have had a lot less deer in our yard since the culling. I thank you and I know my wife does as well," said resident Egon Klatt, whose wife's flowers had been eaten repeatedly despite efforts to keep the deer away.

It wasn't just residents that showed hesitation to go forward with this plan. At a discussion session prior to the regular meeting, Commissioner Keith Mulvihill questioned what the long term objectives of deer management in Mt. Lebanon are.

"What is our goal? Are we trying to eradicate every deer in Mt. Lebanon?...Going forward, I think we need to think about how much we're willing to spend to get rid of the last deer," said Mulvihill.

The price tag on the current recommended plan is $50,800, as compared to $20,000 spent for the culling in early 2007.

The commission expects to have an agreement with the USDA ready for the Oct. 22 meeting.

10/25/07

der about the size of a half dollar, a few inches from my face."

— **Teresa Swimkosky**, 34, of Scott, waitress

"Spiders, for my whole life. I was bitten twice, once in the hand and my entire arm swelled, then once in the foot, and my entire leg swelled.

"I check all the rooms at night before going to bed. And, every few months an exterminator comes and sprays for all pests, but mainly for spiders

"Once in a car I spotted an average-sized spider on me. I screamed, my husband slowed down, and I got out of the car and refused to go back in. I walked a while."

— **Maria Abraham**, 38, of Bethel Park, physician's assistant

"The creaking sounds on the steps or in the house when you're all alone at home or in bed."

— **Brian Ashton**, 20, of Bethel Park, student at Robert Morris University

"Barak Obama as president of the United States. Luke Ravenstahl being elected mayor. Both are too young, inexperienced and immature for those jobs."

— **Barb Horwith**, 65, of Peters, hair stylist

"I'm so scared of the so-called thousand-leggers I once

PETERS

A high-tech method to count deer

Study to use global positioning system for accurate estimate of population

By Janice Crompton
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Starting within the next couple of weeks, Peters residents can expect to see mysterious men lurking in the woods at night, equipped with night-vision goggles, infrared beams and spotlights.

They're not from outer space, just the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which will conduct a controversial study of the deer population in Peters from late October through Feb. 1, 2008.

And, the methods used by the global positioning system-toting surveyors is said to be more accurate than aerial photography with thermal imaging.

Council Monday balked at the cost of the survey — $8,756 — but in the end a slim majority of council members said the cost was worth it, compared to the damage that can be, and has been, done by deer.

Council voted 4-3 to commission the study from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service — Wildlife Services, with members Patricia Moore, Frank Arcuri, Robert Lewis, and James Berquist voting in favor.

"I don't think $8,756 is a lot of money," said Mr. Lewis, who pointed out that the cost of injuries and repairs from one deer-related vehicle accident could exceed that amount.

David Ball, Daniel McMenamin and William Naumoff dissented, saying they didn't believe the expense was merited.

An 11-member Deer Management Advisory committee formed by township officials and residents to address the growing deer population had recommended against the USDA proposal, citing the cost.

This summer, the committee reviewed plans from various services that would come up with deer management programs. With the program and survey, the USDA cost would have been $16,565.

The committee saw little value in a survey, but recommended bow hunting and matching hunters with property owners for a long-term solution that would be conducted within state Game Commission guidelines.

The USDA uses sharpshooting to help control deer populations in Upper St. Clair and Mt. Lebanon, but the committee felt the large, open spaces in Peters would be more conducive to bow hunting.

Already, Peters is soliciting bow hunters and property owners. Township police are conducting background checks on those who volunteer to hunt. It could begin by next month.

Janice Crompton can be reached at jcrompton@post-gazette.com or 724-223-0156.

Newcomers, incumbents all want a say in upcoming school contruction project

By Mary Niederberger
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

campaign2007
mt. lebanon

ning for her sixth term, and Sue Rose, 46, who is running for her second term. Both women are

he's researched in other states. Through the partnerships, a private firm builds the school

11/2007

Deer hunt will continue in Mt. Lebanon

by Sara-Summer Wolf
For The Almanac
writer@thealmanac.net

Out of time to plead their case, close to a dozen Mt. Lebanon residents came Oct. 22 in a last ditch effort to persuade the municipality's five commissioners to change their stance concerning deer management.

Some of these residents, however, said they feel these repeated requests for consideration have fallen upon deaf ears.

"I have reached the point where I am so thoroughly exasperated with the fact that we can speak and speak and speak on something, but you folks have your own personal agenda and you're not genuinely concerned about considering the option. You're just wanting to come up with justification for what you are intending to do," said resident Barbara Sollenberger.

The plan that has so many residents up in arms calls for eight nights of trapping and 12 nights of shooting beginning in early December in an effort to reduce the number of deer in the municipality.

The cost to Mt. Lebanon taxpayers? $51,000. This past winter Mt. Lebanon conducted its first culling of deer in the township. This step came after the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Service was hired by the municipality to conduct a survey of the deer population in Mt. Lebanon. They found approximately 15 deer per square mile. The recommended number of deer for this type of community is one to three deer per square mile.

Over a six-week period from Feb. 28 until April 4, the USDA removed 69 deer, including 31 fawn and 38 adults. Many of those females were pregnant, accounting for 56 fetuses also removed. The most recent plan from the USDA, however, recommends much higher figures. According to the Wildlife Services Activities Summary Report, "Wildlife Services recommends that the municipality continue deer removal operations in 2007-2008 to work toward a deer density near or at 2-5 deer per square mile. Future removal efforts will most likely require a minimum of 12 nights of shooting and eight nights of trapping, targeting 150 deer in 2007-2008." The culling will be conducted in local parks, as well as in private yards when requested by the homeowner.

One concern of residents is the lack of notification as to when and where the USDA will be firing and the safety issue that poses. "It is too dangerous to allow shooting in a small community to protect plants," said resident Stacey Chick. "It is too dangerous and expensive to create a public safety issue."

The commissioners disagreed, however. The vote to authorize the kill passed 4-1, with Keith Mulvihill voting against the plan. The plan, which will cost tax payers nearly $51,000 will be enacted towards the end of November when the weather turns colder. Culling activities will take place between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

4/19/08

COMMUNITY NEWS

USDA misses dead deer in Mt. Lebanon

by Sara-Summer Wolf
for The Almanac
writer@thealmanac.net

When Micah Wolf walked out his front door to head to work March 7, he was saddened to see a dead dear lying in his Lindendale Drive yard. His assumption that the deer had been struck by a passing vehicle changed quickly, when he walked to his car.

"There was a good size pool of blood about half a foot from the house," reported Wolf.

Upon closer examination, it was evident that the deer had been shot in the neck. He called for animal control to remove the deer from the property owned by his parents.

According to Tom Kelley, public works director, the deer was one of four shot in a nearby yard by the USDA Wildlife Services as a part of the municipality's deer management program. The neighbor was one of over 100 residents who have called and requested agreements with the USDA to control the deer in their yards.

"The USDA did shoot that deer on another property...There wasn't any blood and there wasn't any blood trail running away, so they thought they missed it. They also have a heat seeking infrared device to track the deer. They went up and down the street and couldn't locate it," said Kelley.

Kelley was not sure what property the deer had been shot on, but according to Wolf, animal control informed him that the next door neighbor had such an agreement with the USDA. Craig Swopes of the USDA could not confirm the property on which it was shot due to confidentiality agreements, but noted that it was less than 100 yards away.

> **In the last three years, since the deer management program began in urban areas, we have removed 750 deer and this is the first incident like this.'**
>
> *Craig Swopes, USDA*

"In the last three years, since the deer management program began in urban areas, we have removed 750 deer and this is the first incident like this," said Swopes.

Mt. Lebanon's deer management plan, which is available on the municipality's Web site, states that all carcasses will be removed immediately. In this case not only was the deer left on the property, according to Wolf, animal control told him he would have to clean up the blood left behind.

According to Swopes, even if there had been blood or hair indicating that the animal had been hit which there was neither and they tracked the animal to the neighboring property, they are not authorized to enter private property without consent.

In such instances, the USDA would either wait till morning to contact the resident, or it would be up to municipality animal control to enter the property and remove the deer.

Swopes emphasized, however, that these instances are extremely rare, and of the 168 deer removed in two years from Mt. Lebanon, there have been no other cases of this sort.

"Ninety-nine percent of the time when you take a shot in the neck or head, the deer dies on the spot," said Mr. Swopes.

Mt. Lebanon is currently in its second year of deer management. The program began Dec. 15, and while the contract runs through September, Kelley said the culling will likely end with the winter weather. Shooting takes place between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m.

As of March 7, 77 deer had been killed. The contract allows up to 150 to be culled at a cost of $51,000.

For Wolf, however, he does not believe a single deer should be killed in this neighborhood.

"When you live on a property that borders a wooded area, you expect to see deer. I enjoy watching them. They were here first, and they have just as much right to be here as we do."