



Deer in the Capital Region

THE BLACKTAIL DEER DIET

Blacktail are the only deer species in the capital region and will feed on almost any plant species. Their main food sources may include: blackberry, elderberry, gooseberry, huckleberry, red huckleberry, salmonberry, serviceberry, thimbleberry, ocean spray, wild crab apple, ornamental cedar, red alder, Douglas fir, willow, western red cedar, salal, clover, dandelion, wheatgrass, lichen, mushrooms and other fungi.

DEER AND YOUR YARD

A combination of fencing, frightening techniques and deer repellents can help protect your yard and property from deer damage. Of these, fencing is the most effective. Other tactics might include water spray motion sensors or deer-resistant landscaping.

Some examples of plants not palatable to deer are allium, aconitum, eucalyptus, lavender, phlomis, and eupatorium. Speak with a landscape professional or local nursery staff to learn more about deer-resistant plants that thrive in your area.

DEER AND YOU

Deer are wild animals and as such can be dangerous, especially if they feel threatened. Do not approach deer or their fawns. Does (female deer) can be aggressive once fawns are born, beginning in April and as they mature through late August. Likewise, bucks (male deer) can be aggressive during the rut (mating season) from late October to early December.

When you see deer and your presence in the area creates a response, such as a change in stance, ear position or physical movement, you are too close. Give the deer plenty of space (15 to 20 metres) to either move or exit the area. Do not walk close to the deer, choose another route.

Be sure to walk your dog on a leash and back away slowly with your dog if a deer becomes aggressive.



INFORMATION FOR RESIDENTS



Making a difference...together

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DEER MANAGEMENT

In January 2011, the Capital Regional District (CRD) began developing a plan to manage deer in urban and agricultural areas. Deer have traditionally been managed by the provincial government, but are now being managed by local governments. This new role will be approached differently by each municipality, and those interested in pursuing management activities can be supported by the CRD.

Strategy Development

To develop a Regional Deer Management Strategy, residents were invited to submit their experiences with deer, research was completed on deer vehicle collisions from ICBC, and a Citizens Advisory Group process was undertaken with assistance from an Expert Resources Working Group. The CRD Board approved this strategy and its recommendations in December 2012.

To read the Regional Deer Management Strategy visit our website: www.crd.bc.ca/deermanagement.

Monitoring

The CRD recognizes that deer are a natural part of our environment. Although exact population numbers are nearly impossible to collect, other sources of data indicate that human and deer interactions in the CRD are increasing.

Statistics will continue to be collected and monitored for crop loss, deer-vehicle collisions, bylaw infractions (i.e. feeding deer), predator sightings and complaints received, such as property damage or aggression towards humans or pets.

LIFE CYCLE OF BLACKTAIL DEER

The life cycle of urban blacktail deer differs from that of deer in the wild. Without the pressures of predation and food scarcity, the rutting and fawning seasons are extended.

Rutting Season

Leading up to the late autumn mating (rutting) periods, bucks increase displays of dominance and indirect threats. A dominant buck typically circles a rival with deliberate steps, back arched, head low and tail flicking. Bucks also display dominance by violently thrashing the bushes with their antlers. (Late summer antlers are rubbed on tree trunks to remove velvet.)

During the rutting season, from late October to December, mature bucks of equal size may engage in head-to-head fights. Bucks are capable of breeding as yearlings, but older, dominant bucks do most of the mating. Most does breed as yearlings and birth their first fawn around their second birthday.

Offspring

After a gestation period of six to seven months, fawns are born from late April to early June. At this time, the does drive away their offspring of the previous year and seek a secluded place to give birth. The white-spotted fawn relies on its colouration, lack of scent and silence for protection. Does leave fawns hidden while they forage in the vicinity, returning to nurse them.

Twin fawns are most common in urban environments, though young does often have only one offspring, and occasionally, triplets. At birth, fawns weigh 2.7 to 4 kg. Typically, does produce offspring throughout their life, with over 90% of them giving birth every year. This prolific species can double its population in a few years under favourable conditions. Normally, 45–70% of fawns die but significantly more survive in urban environments. Few mature adults live beyond 10–12 years. Malnutrition, deer-vehicle collisions and poor health are the main causes of death.

FEEDING DEER PROHIBITED

The consequences of feeding deer unnatural types and amounts of food can range from irritating behaviour to catastrophic health issues. Deer have specialized seasonal food requirements and require variety. By providing unnatural foods, well-intentioned people may be “killing with kindness”.

Feeding deer can increase conflicts with humans. Animals that are fed become habituated and lose their natural wariness of humans.

The intentional feeding of deer contravenes Provincial guidelines as well as bylaws in the Capital Regional District. In Oak Bay, it is a bylaw violation to feed deer or any wildlife and a \$300 fine will be levied for each offence. Contact the District of Oak Bay for details, www.oakbay.ca.

An example of a bylaw violation would be leaving out a bag of apples or other compostable food scraps on a property where these items are not consistently being grown or produced for human consumption.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ministry of Environment Conservation Officer Service:

Ungulate Conflicts: www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/info/wildlife_human_interaction/docs/ungulates.html

Urban Ungulate Conflict Analysis: www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/info/wildlife_human_interaction/UrbanUngulates.html

Gardener's Guide: www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/info/wildlife_human_interaction/docs/garden.html

Deer impacts blog: www.deerimpacts.blogspot.ca/search/label/municipal%20deer