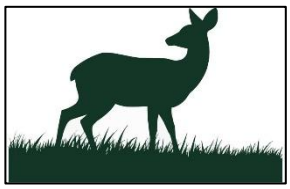

White-Tailed Deer in the Ardens

Frequently Asked Questions

Are Deer Really a Problem in the Ardens?

Yes. The overabundance of white-tailed deer has serious consequences for the health of the herd, the environment, and the community:

- **Poor deer health:** Overpopulation leads to food scarcity, malnutrition, smaller body size, lower reproductive success, and greater vulnerability to disease. This is not humane for the deer themselves (Cornell University).
- **Forest and ecosystem damage:** Deer over-browsing prevents seedlings from maturing into trees, leading to the long-term decline of native forests. The loss of native plants reduces biodiversity, destabilizes soils (causing erosion), and allows invasive plants to take over (Audubon Society; Penn State University).
- **Deer as disease hosts:** White-tailed deer are key hosts for the black-legged tick (deer tick), which carries Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses that affect both people and pets (CDC).
- **Vehicle collisions:** Deer-vehicle accidents are common and can cause human & deer injury, property damage, and deer fatalities.

What is the Sunnyside Deer Management Plan?

The purpose of the Plan is to provide an effective, science-based deer management strategy that supports long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native vegetation, wildlife, and other natural features of our open space lands.

The Plan calls for the removal of 12–15 deer from the Sunnyside Tract (between the train tracks behind Sconset Road and I-95). This reduction will bring the herd closer to a healthy, sustainable level. (See the attached *2025 Ardentown Deer Management Plan* for details.)

Won't this be dangerous to residents?

No. The controlled removal will be:

- Conducted over a two-day period in late fall 2025.
- Limited only to the Sunnyside Tract, where there are no immediate residential neighbors.
- Carried out by experienced Arden bowhunters working from elevated tree stands.
- **Archery only** – no firearms will be used.
- Publicly announced in advance, with entrances to the tract temporarily closed.

But I love the deer!

So do we. White-tailed deer are a native and valued species. The goal is not elimination, only to restore balance. A smaller, healthier herd benefits:

- The **deer themselves** (with more food and less disease).
- The **ecosystem** (more native plants and biodiversity).
- The **community** (fewer accidents, less property damage).

Can't the deer be controlled by non-lethal means?

- **Fencing and repellents:** These may work for individual yards but are impractical and cost-prohibitive on a landscape scale like Ardentown.
- **Contraceptives:** Despite decades of research, fertility control has not proven effective for free-ranging deer. Current immunocontraceptives require repeated dosing or darting, are extremely costly, and are logistically infeasible for large, mobile herds. The National Park Service and Cornell University both conclude that fertility control cannot replace controlled removal for managing open populations (Cornell University).

What happens to the deer that are harvested?

The venison will be donated to local food banks through Delaware's *Hunters Against Hunger* program, which distributes healthy protein to families in need..

Has this been done elsewhere?

Yes. Managed deer reduction is standard practice in many natural areas across the region:

- **Delaware:** Brandywine Creek State Park, White Clay Creek State Park.
- **Pennsylvania:** Valley Forge National Historical Park, Rose Valley Borough.
- **Nationally:** Numerous National Parks and State Parks.

These programs have successfully reduced deer densities, improved forest regeneration, and produced healthier herds.

For more information:

Scientific & Wildlife Research Sources:

Penn State University: Issue: Deer Abundance
https://ecosystems.psu.edu/outreach/youth/sftrc/deer/issue-deer

Audobon Society: Surging Deer Populations Are a Crisis for Eastern Forests
https://www.audubon.org/magazine/surging-deer-populations-are-crisis-eastern-forests

Cornell University: Efficacy of surgical sterilization for managing overabundant suburban white-tail deer
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310493146_Efficacy_of_surgical_sterilization_for_managing_overabundant_suburban_white-tailed_deer

Cornell University: Red oak seedlings as indicators of deer browse pressure: Gauging the outcome of different white-tailed deer management approaches
https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ece3.5729

The Wildlife Society: Fertility Control for Wildlife: Reality or Illusion?
https://wildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/WildlifeFertilityControl02-2.pdf

Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
https://mafwa.org/?p=1541

National & Other State Resources:

CDC: How Lyme Disease Spreads
https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/causes/index.html

National Park Service: How are White-tailed Deer Managed at Valley Forge?
https://www.nps.gov/vafo/learn/management/white-tailed-deer.htm

Rose Valley Borough, Pa. Deer Management:
https://www.delcotimes.com/2016/09/25/deer-bow-hunting-to-start-in-rose-valley/
https://www.rosevalleyborough.org/post/public-notice-rose-valley-deer-management-controlled-hunt

NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Deer Overabundance and Impacts
https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/white-tailed-deer/deer-management-conflict-avoidance/overabundance

Delaware-Specific Resources:

Delaware DNREC: Delaware's White-Tailed Deer
https://dnrec.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/hunting/white-tailed-deer/

Delaware Deer Management Plan
https://documents.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Hunting/Documents/Deer%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%2005212010.pdf

Deer Hunting in Delaware State Parks
https://destateparks.com/hunting/

Delaware Hunters Against Hunger
https://dnrec.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/hunting/against-hunger/