

Damage to Natural Areas

White-tailed deer are plant eaters (herbivores) and feed primarily on leaves, buds and twigs. An average deer eats six-to-eight pounds of plants a day or 1 1/4 tons per year. An overabundance of deer can have a profound impact on native vegetation and wildlife habitat. Preferred foods, including rare plants like orchids and lilies, may completely disappear from the landscape. Areas of extreme overpopulation show a "browse line" where there is little vegetation on the forest floor, and the trees and shrubs look as if they have been neatly "pruned" of all leaves up to about five feet. When this happens, young trees are not produced, and habitat and food for nesting forest birds and other wildlife is severely degraded. Several management efforts are underway in the County to reduce deer numbers in order to protect natural areas.



Forest understory with healthy growth of tree seedlings, shrubs and ground cover.



Understory and ground cover severely impacted by deer. A browse line is evident.

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial illness transmitted to humans and animals from the bite of certain ticks, particularly the black-legged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). The nymph stage of the tick, which is active from late spring through summer, is most likely to transmit Lyme disease. About 80% of people infected develop a rash at the site of the bite that expands to resemble a bulls-eye in appearance. Mild flu-like symptoms and joint and muscle pain may also appear. Left untreated, serious complications may arise. When caught early, however, Lyme disease is usually easily treated with antibiotics.

The best defense against this disease and other tick born diseases is protection from tick bites. Here are some suggestions:

- Wear light colors, tuck pants into socks
- Use insect repellents that specify ticks
- If you regularly work outdoors consider long-lasting "Permethrin" repellents for clothing.
- Because the blacklegged tick is very small, about the size of the head of a pin or smaller, it is especially important to **thoroughly** check for ticks after being in areas where they live.
- Carefully remove ticks promptly – transfer of the disease usually takes at least 20 hours.

If ticks are a problem around your home you can modify your landscape to make the area less hospitable to them. Remove leaf litter, prune trees, and clear underbrush/woodpiles. Providing more sunlight can significantly reduce the number of ticks in some areas. Some products are now available to help reduce the number of ticks in an area - for more information visit the following websites;

www.aldf.com/fourPoster.shtml

www.ticktubes.com

For more information on Lyme disease contact the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services at (240) 777-1755; or visit: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/lymedisease

Phone Numbers Information and Assistance

M-NCPPC Department of Parks, Montgomery County

www.ParksDeerManagement.org

Deer Management Plan and
General Information on Deer in Parks
301-962-1341, 301-962-1342
301-962-1344

—

Removal of Dead Deer from Roads

240-773-5960

—

Report Damage to Agricultural Crops, Gardens and Ornamental Plants

301-962-1341

—

Preventing Deer Damage

http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Hunt_Trap/deer/deer_damage/ddmtintro.asp

or

The Maryland Nuisance Wildlife Information Line

1-877-463-6497

—

Emergencies Involving Deer

Montgomery County Police
(301) 279-8000

—

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Monday-Friday 8am-4:30pm 301-258-7308
After hours 410-260-8888

Montgomery County Park Police

for emergencies on County Parkland only
301-949-3010

PPSD-NRS:RG 2/11

Living with Deer in Montgomery County, Maryland

M-NCPPC Department of Parks,
Montgomery County

Park Planning & Stewardship Division
Natural Resources Stewardship Section

This publication produced by:

The Montgomery County
Deer Management Work Group

M-NCPPC Department of Parks,
Montgomery County

The Humane Society of the United
States

www.ParksNaturalResources.org



Deer in Montgomery County

The white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) is an important and valued part of Montgomery County's natural heritage. Deer were uncommon in the County until the early 1980's but have since increased dramatically. For many, the sight of a deer bounding gracefully through the forest or in their backyard is an exciting and memorable experience. But for other residents, whose landscape plantings or farm crops have been devastated by deer, or who have had the costly and upsetting experience of hitting a deer with an automobile, there is a concern that we may have "too much of a good thing."

Montgomery County's patchwork of natural areas and landscaped suburban yards is ideal deer habitat. With few natural predators and unavoidable restrictions on hunting, deer populations have increased dramatically in recent decades. Continued development and human population growth concentrates deer into smaller and smaller areas resulting in increased deer-human conflicts including;

- Deer-related automobile accidents
- Damage to agricultural crops and residential gardens
- Impacts to natural vegetation
- Lyme disease

Deer Management Plan

Through the recommendations of a Citizen Task Force established by the County Council, The Montgomery County Deer Management Work Group (DMWG) was established in 1995 to develop and implement a Comprehensive Management Plan for White-tailed Deer in Montgomery County. The DMWG is a multi-agency committee with representatives from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission - Montgomery County Department of Parks; the MD Department of Natural Resources - Heritage & Wildlife; the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service; the Montgomery County Police Dept; the U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and the National Park Service.

The goal of the County's Deer Management Plan is to reduce human-deer conflicts to a level that is compatible with human priorities and land uses. The program includes the collection, centralization and use of accurate data on deer and their impacts; the implementation of public awareness and education programs to better inform citizens about deer-human conflicts and their prevention; and the implementation of deer management options including habitat manipulation, repellants, physical exclusion, and population management. The plan can be found at: www.parksdeermanagement.org

Living with White-tailed Deer

Implementing Montgomery County's Deer Management Plan will help reduce deer-human conflicts but it can never eliminate them. Deer are back in Montgomery County to stay and we all must learn to live with our new neighbors. Here are some ways to help reduce and prevent deer problems.

Getting Help Controlling Deer Impacts

Helpful information and several excellent publications including, "Controlling Deer Damage in Maryland", are available through the **Maryland Cooperative Extension** at 301-590-9650 and the **Maryland Nuisance Wildlife Information Line** toll free at 877-463-6497. Many are available on the web at www.naturalresources.umd.edu

Protecting Crops

Farmers have several options to protect crops. Use of fencing or dogs contained by buried electric fences can be effective for certain high value crops, nursery or orchard operations. Where regulations permit, farmers can open their land to hunters to reduce the number of deer on their property. The Maryland **Department of Natural Resources** (DNR) can help develop an effective program (call 301-432-4307).

Several methods are available to homeowners to reduce deer damage. Where possible, landscape with deer-resistant plants. A list of deer-resistant plants is

available from the sources above. Deer repellants can reduce damage to other plants.

Some repellants are better than others. Read product labels to compare ingredients, ease of application and longevity. For areas with high deer numbers, a variety of fencing options are detailed in the literature mentioned above. Recent changes to the county code now allow for 8' tall plastic "deer fencing" in any side or backyard in the county. Plastic tubing or low fencing around tree trunks will prevent bark rubbing.

Workshops on Controlling Deer Damage to Home Landscapes

Part of the County's Deer Management Plan includes a program of workshops for homeowners on how to prevent deer damage on private property. Programs are available free of charge to homeowner and civic groups within the county. Co-sponsored by the Maryland Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners and M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks, these workshops provide homeowners with the latest information on effective uses of repellents, fencing and vegetation management as well as educational information on other deer impacts and solutions. For more information or to schedule one for your homeowner or civic association call the **Maryland Cooperative Extension** at (301) 590-2809.

Automobile Accidents

Deer-Vehicle Collisions (DVCs) Reported by the Montgomery County Police Department

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
DVCs	1244	1776	1705	1774	1891	2033	2003	2127	2047	1997	1969	1951	1867	1841
Year	2009													
DVCs	1945													

Driving with Deer in Mind

The most important thing drivers can do to reduce the chances of an accident with a deer is to **drive the speed limit**. At night, reduce speeds below the limit, especially in rain, snow or fog. Here are some other things to keep in mind as a driver.

Deer are most active at dawn and dusk.

- Watch for deer where roads pass through wooded or rural areas.
- Deer crossing signs indicate areas where heavily used deer trails cross roadways. Slow down and watch for the eye-shine of deer near the road edges.
- Be especially cautious during seasons of high deer activity including - October to January during the breeding season, and May and June when yearlings are seeking new territories.
- Deer usually travel in groups. If you see a deer cross the road, slow down and use caution. More are likely to follow.
- Above all, maintain control of your car. Do not slam on brakes or swerve sharply. The worst accidents involve hitting a tree or oncoming traffic.
- **FYI: Deer whistles** attached to cars are supposed to warn deer of a vehicles approach. Scientific data indicates that these devices **have NO effect on deer**.

