

AD HOC WHITETAIL DEER
COMMITTEE



JUNE 1998

FINAL REPORT

June 22, 1998

Upper St. Clair Township Board of Commissioners
1820 McLaughlin Run Road
Upper St. Clair, PA 15241

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Submitted herewith is the summary report of a four member majority of the Ad Hoc Deer Committee.

As one element of our response to your challenge to contribute to community knowledge and awareness of the deer situation, we sponsored an informative Deer Symposium on April 29th with what we feel was an excellent panel of experts representing all aspects of wildlife management. This program was videotaped and has appeared frequently on community television. Other video programs may be considered. One of our detailed recommendations deals with other communications.

You challenged us to look at alternative responses to the deer problems. We quickly recognized that potential actions were divided into two categories, positive herd population management and actions to defend against the symptoms of overpopulation.

As to the first, only three general potential options surfaced, birth control, animal trapping and transporting and herd culling. By law and regulation, and effectiveness consideration, neither birth control nor trapping and transporting are currently possible or viable options for herd management.

With the exception of some traffic safety actions, most of the second category, symptomatic treatments, are actions to be carried out by property owners. Community level activity in this area lies mainly in communication.

Following are the committee's individual recommendations on eight actions which should contribute to the quality of life and personal safety in those areas impacted by our deer population. These actions are detailed in the following pages.

We thank you for the opportunity to be of service in this controversial area. We sincerely hope that you will accept and act promptly on these recommendations and we stand ready to support your decisions in any way we can.

If you have additional questions on any of these subjects, please contact us for clarification.

Sincerely,

William Caswell

Mark Kurtzrock

Michael Marks

Susan Redfield

CONTENTS

1. Cover letter
2. Background statement
3. Recommendations
 - a. Herd management program (archery hunting).
 - b. Strieter Lite test installation.
 - c. Roadway warning signs.
 - d. Roadway safety - other
 - e. Anti-feeding legislation.
 - f. Control or Test Area installation.
 - g. Lyme disease statement.
 - h. Community communications improvements.
4. Non recommendations
 - a. Birth control
 - b. Speed limit changes.
5. Supplemental thoughts on common objections.
 - a. Overpopulation or not.
 - b. Hunting is ineffective.
6. Suggested open letter to the public.

PREAMBLE

The Board of Commissioners of Upper St. Clair appointed this Ad Hoc Committee in response to numerous citizen complaints about current and potential property damage and public safety problems with what was assumed to be a substantially excessive deer population in the Township.

We were charged with looking into the problem, providing additional resident education, evaluating alternative courses of action and making recommendations for Township action.

To quote from the Western Maryland University Research and Education Center book "Controlling Deer Damage in Maryland," two key sentences pointedly summarize their conclusions. 1. Controlling deer damage requires a comprehensive program." and 2. "Unfortunately, reducing the deer population is the only method that offers a long-term solution."

As the committee investigated, we reviewed literature from a number of universities, state wildlife agencies and other organizations with interests and expertise in managing deer herds, particularly in urban settings.

Options generally fall into three categories:

1. Property damage abatement, fencing, repellants, etc... These are actions which individual residents can take to reduce deer damage to their ornamental landscaping and flower and vegetable gardens. Several facts must be noted. At a given herd size, when prevented from eating certain plants or at some locations, deer will only move to less preferred plantings and less protected locations. This is a problem transference action - not a solution. As a political entity, the township's only contribution to this is the dissemination of "how to" information.

2. Traffic safety. This category is a community action issue which includes such items as Strieter Lights, safety fencing, speed limits and policing of same. Most of our township's higher deer hazard roads are numbered state highways (Rte. 19) or Pinchot roads technically managed by the state. State Highway Department rules may apply to some actions and that unit's position should be considered for others.

3. Deer population control. Obviously the two main alternatives are doing nothing or taking action to reduce and control herd size. The committee has researched several alternatives for population control including trapping and transporting excess deer, various potential birth control alternatives and herd culling by hunting.

In the detailed report which follows we will elaborate on all of these elements and provide background information.

CULLING PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Nearly two years ago, the Township sent a survey to all of our 6000 plus households. Over 1900 were returned representing over a 30% return rate, relatively high for most surveys, indicating strong feelings exist in the community.

In response to the question concerning desire for a control program, 68% of the responders to the question said yes.

In response to the question "Would you allow hunting?" over 50% said yes, this in spite of the fact that there was no clarification of the safety qualifications of such a program. Citizens were not informed that hunting would be archery only and only from elevated tree stands by highly skilled archers. They also had no knowledge that birth control is not a currently viable system for herd reduction nor is trapping and transporting a permitted option.

There is reason to believe that our deer herd has grown and that deer problems have further increased since the date of that survey. Many qualified sources state that without an active management program, communities can expect deer herds to double in size every two to three years.

Professional wildlife biologists and game agencies recommend urban deer populations of 5 to 10 per square mile of woodland area within a suburban community. Various educated estimates of our community's total deer population range from 400/500 to 800/1000.

Whichever population estimate is accepted, it is obvious that we have far too many deer and a majority of our citizenry is losing patience for community level action.

Reported roadway deer accidents have been approximately 100 per year in the recent past. Insurance agents and others tell us that it is probable that only half of the actual total are reported. Extrapolating, total deer incidents may be as many as 200 per year. These numbers, whether the number is 100 or 200 would tend to lead one to favor the higher population estimates.

It is acknowledged that symptomatic defenses such as use of repellents, fencing and scare devices; selective planting; highway safety improvements or any similar approach contributes nothing to herd population management. They only transfer negative deer effects to other properties and other planting targets.

Without overt herd reduction, increasing deer population will cause disproportionately more frequent highway safety hazards

and greater levels of property damage.

RECOMMENDATION

A majority of the Ad Hoc Deer Committee recommends that the Board of Commissioners of Upper St. Clair, PA proceed to, as a minimum, establish a formal archery hunting program for the community including opening the Boyce Rd. property and any other larger tract Township property on a controlled basis similar to those practices in Bethel Park and Fox Chapel. Private owners of larger tracts of undeveloped or wooded property should also be encouraged to participate in opening their lands to such a program.

Based upon the experience of others who have taken this course of herd reduction, and assuming that alternate methods continue to be unavailable, it is further recommended that such program be continued for an estimated five years, subject to annual review, and then be more comprehensively re-evaluated.

We further recommend that a professional biologist be hired to study woodland conditions, deer population, ecologic balance and progress toward deer population goals. In the future, should progress be substantially lower than desired, consideration should be given to supplementing archery hunting with a sharpshooting program. That in turn would require a more definitive population count such as an aerial survey or detailed professional census. It is estimated that such an extended effort would cost approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000.

In the event that a self-management hunting program such as Fox Chapel is preferred, costs would equate approximately to the employment cost of a supervisory/management level employee for a three to four month period per year. Success would be dependent upon having an individual employee experienced in archery hunting and committed to program success.

Should the Commissioners prefer to utilize the services of an organization such as Whitetail Management, as does McCandless and Bethel Park, cost to the Township would be negligible.

Similar controls and restrictions should apply to either program method.

If a delegated program is chosen, oversight would probably be necessary. Should there not be a natural functional fit with existing departments or committees, we recommend that a small (three person) oversight committee/commission be established to receive activity reports from the hunting group and to periodically review their compliance with procedures, to monitor results vs. goals, to evaluate the need for goal changes and to provide information on these subjects to the Board of Commissioners. Such a committee should be composed

of persons with a positive committment to making the overall program function safely and effectively and with a willingness to be open to later developments in alternate methodology.

Again, assuming that there is no reason to believe conditions in our Township are significantly different from other Allegheny County periphery communities, we recommend a soft target for the harvest as 150 to 200 female animals per year.

The professional biologist would assist in determination of ongoing targets following the study that would be conducted as previously recommended.

STRIETER LITES"

BACKGROUND

This product is a proprietary, patented item, consisting of a small, triangular cross sectioned prismatic reflector designed to be mounted on poles approximately the height of auto headlights at alternating points along both sides of a roadway. The principal is based upon auto headlights being reflected back and forth across the road from reflector to reflector creating what the manufacturer describes as a wall of light that acts as a deterrent to deer crossing the road while vehicles are passing as a means of reducing the auto accident potential. Meticulous installation and maintenance are said to be essential to their success.

Mr. Strieter has a number of satisfied and repeat customer highway agencies although admittedly, the bulk of them seem to be in areas of flatter and straighter terrain than Upper St. Clair. There are a lesser number of non-users and former users who have tested Strieter Lites and found them to be of little noted benefit. The Pa. Highway Department has surveyed other agencies and based upon their findings have not decided to pursue installations. They are willing to test them but only if the manufacturer provides a no-cost test installation for that purpose which Mr. Strieter has declined to do.

Longitudinal spacing of reflectors should be a function of the transverse distance between the two roadside lines of reflectors and to some degree of the terrain in which they are installed so costs per unit of distance vary considerably with differences in those factors.

Mr. Fred Kunz, a local registered professional engineer, has done an evaluation of a short test installation in one or more of our higher accident road areas and appraises the cost at \$2895.20 with annual maintenance costs at about \$149.60, both per half mile. He has also offered at no cost to the Township, to provide periodic inspections of the pilot installations during the first year of use. In addition, assuming dilligent and comprehensive police incident reports are available, he will prepare a performance report at the end of the year to determine the level of success achieved by the program. It is essential that police provide clearly detailed summary reports on all deer related accidents reported and observed.

With no intent to denigrate the quality of Mr. Kunz's very thorough evaluation, and recognizing that he has included a 10% allowance for overrun, it should be noted that other localities installing Strieter Lites have reported actual, out-of-pocket costs for an installation at \$7,500 to

\$14,000 per linear mile and have noted higher maintenance costs than his estimate. Labor rates and installation time variances may account for these differences.

A copy of Mr. Kunz's letter outlining his proposal is appended hereto.

It is noteworthy that this product does not act to deter deer travel, to reduce other property damage manifestations nor to influence population levels except as fewer deer may be killed by automobiles. It should also be noted that there is high general public awareness of and curiosity about this product which will not be satisfied without actual testing.

It is estimated that even a successful herd culling program will take several years to achieve target populations. Strieter Lites may help to reduce auto-deer collisions during this period.

RECOMMENDATION

The full Ad Hoc Deer Committee agrees to recommend to the Commissioners that they approve and fund one or two short test installations, preferred areas being along the higher accident portions of Boyce Road and along Route 19 near the cloverleaf.

Further, that if state Department of Transportation approval is required, that the Commissioners authorize the appropriate Township office to pursue such approval for test installations.



KUNZ ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS

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June 1, 1998

Upper St. Clair Ad Hoc Committee
Upper St. Clair Township
1820 McLaughlin Run Road
USC, Pennsylvania 15241-2118

Re: Wild Animal Highway Warning Reflector System.

Dear Committee Members:

In response to the request of Ms. Sandy Conder, we submit the following information regarding installation costs and maintenance information for the referenced system as manufactured by the Strieter Corporation of Rock Island, Illinois.

On Thursday, May 28th we accompanied Mr. George Kostelich, Township Operations Foreman, on a ride around the southern tier of the township. The intent was to observe the areas where there has been the highest number of deer /auto incidents. We inspected a section of route #19 from the mall south to the Country Club Road overpass, and again on Route #19 from Boyce Road south to Circle Drive. We then drove west on Boyce Road to the Chartiers Creek, which is the end of the Township. After turning north onto Mayview Road, we drove until we once again entered the Township after crossing the creek above Mayview Hospital. The inspection included areas such as Sky Ridge Drive and Galaxy Drive along the old golf course and north to Bridgeville.

We then drove along Morrow and Morton Roads finishing our tour along Hastings Mill Road, finally returning to the Township building by driving past the country club. Mr. Kostelich stated that the route we had just covered was essentially the same as that which had been traveled by Mr. Strieter when he had visited the area.

Mr. Kostelich provided the hourly rate for the township employees that would be involved with the installation of the reflector system and the price for the 2.2#/Ft sign post channel that they use for such items. With that information, plus the installation criteria and cost data provided by the Strieter Corporation, we are able to provide the following estimate:

**UNIT PRICE – STRIETER- LITE WILDLIFE ANIMAL HIGHWAY
WARNING REFLECTOR SYSTEM.**

Qty.	Description	Cost/Each	Extension	Labor	Total Cost
1	4' Sign Post	\$.75/ft	\$3.00	\$8.45	\$11.45
1	Strieter Reflector	\$17.95	\$17.95	Incl.	\$17.95
2	Sheet metal screws	\$0.25	\$0.50	Incl.	\$0.50
	Total Cost				\$29.90

ESTIMATED COST FOR ½ MILE SECTION (40' ROADWAY)

Qty.	Description	Cost/Each	Total Cost
88	Reflector Units	\$29.90	\$2,631.20
Lot	Miscellaneous Cost	\$3.00	<u>\$ 264.00</u>
	TOTAL COST /1/2 MILE		\$2,895.20

Note 1: The Miscellaneous Cost adder is in excess of 10% of the unit price. This should cover the unforeseen problems that might arise during the course of installation.

Note 2: The annual maintenance for these units is estimated at \$1.70 / year. For the ½ mile section referred to above the annual cost is estimated at \$149.60

The installation and maintenance costs combined are approximately equal to the damages to a vehicle in one auto/deer collision.

The facts regarding these units indicate that they are very successful in eliminating / or substantially reducing the auto/deer collision incident rate wherever they are installed and maintained in a conscientiously applied program. The value in upgrading the safety to property and residents of the township indicate **strongly** that a pilot program in our high incident areas would certainly be worthwhile.

The above estimate is based on the Boyce road or Morton road areas as described in the narrative relating to the inspection tour. The sections of roadway along Route #19 would actually cost less since the spacing between reflector units would be greater.

In addition to the "No-Cost" estimate provided herewith, we will be happy to provide periodic inspections of the pilot installations during the first year of use. In addition we will prepare a performance report at the end of the year to determine the level of success achieved by the program. It is assumed that the police will provide a diligent accounting of the number of incidents.

We will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the above at your convenience.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frederick J. Kunz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F' and a long, sweeping underline.

Frederick J. Kunz, P.E.

ROAD SIGNS

BACKGROUND:

Roadway deer accidents have become of growing concern in terms of both personal injury hazards and property damages. In each of recent years, Township Police have recorded approximately 100 deer related accidents. Several local area insurance agents estimate that less than half of such accidents are actually reported to police. They also estimate that the average auto repair cost of such accidents ranges from \$3000 to \$5000 - not including medical costs for any injuries.. It should be noted that these latter figures are personal estimates as local area, overall statistics are not readily available.

Upper St. Clair has relatively few deer warning signs on any local roads, reportedly less than 10 in the whole township, and none on Route 19 which accounts for 40% of Township deer related accidents. In addition, those signs are the conventional "Deer Crossing" with the leaping deer silhouette,

The Pa. Highway Department only allows the "Leaping Deer" warning sign in either 30" or 48" size, mounted diagonally. Various academic studies have shown that such signs make little difference in driving habits, but they cost very little to mount and may contribute to accident reduction.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Commissioners should consider taking whatever action may be necessary to increase the number of signs so that both sides of the road are covered in all roadway areas at which deer have been known to often be present. At least on Route 19 and possibly on other inchot roads, state Highway Department approval may be required.
2. Consideration should be given to using in some locations some form of custom sign that might get greater attention. A number of years ago, to focus on high accident rate intersections, Philadelphia began to use warning signs that said in effect "During the past year, this intersection had the 3rd (or any other number) highest accident rate in the city." U.S.C. could adapt that to read "The next Mile (or half mile, etc...) was the ___ th highest deer accident rate in the community."
3. In implementing this suggestion, Township Maintenance should report any significant incidence of deer carcass removal from areas without warning signage.

ROADWAY SAFETY - OTHER

BACKGROUND

The State University of New York at Syracuse has studied the roadway accident rates in communities similar to Upper St. Clair where deer herds increased to action generating levels followed by herd reductions. They found an explicit correlation between local road accident rates and deer population levels. There is nothing illogical about this as it stands to reason that with no increase in ranging habits, with higher deer numbers, more of them will probably be in the vicinity of roadways when autos are present.

It was demonstrated in that program and related highway tests that cutting brushy areas back further from roadway edges and installation of boundary fences do act to deter road crossing by deer. The assumption of the basis for this accident reduction being that auto headlights alone act to deter deer and motorists who can see deer earlier have more time to react when there is a broader clear space beyond the road edges.

We note that some clearing has recently been taking place along Boyce Road and other roads.

RECOMMENDATION

Upper St. Clair should continue and possibly expand the practice of keeping the maximum clear area along brush and woods bordered local roadways, we suggest to the full width of roadway easements.

Commissioners should also consider taking a leaf from the Interstate Highway and Turnpike manuals and consider fencing the edge of the Boyce Road property where it abuts Boyce Road or other higher accident local roads as an additional accident reduction effort. Standard 40" woven wire (farm type) fencing is adequate for this purpose.

We cannot intelligently estimate the cost of additional roadside brush clearing. Local fence companies were reluctant to quote general costs without specific length and site evaluation. We are advised that conventional small and large animal fencing (farm type) would be adequate. Chain link would not be required.

DEER FEEDING

BACKGROUND

A majority of our citizens who responded to the Township survey indicated that they suffered excessive deer caused damages to their property and feared having roadway hazards become a serious enough problem for a majority of those responding to ask the Township to initiate a herd management and control program.

It should also be noted that in spite of problems with excessive numbers noted by these residents, deer present an appearance of benign beauty, are relatively tame for wild creatures, and being herbivorous, are not normally as individually threatening as some other animals. (This may not be true of bucks in their rutting season.)

As a result of these latter factors, there are a number of citizens who regularly set out salt blocks and feeding stations for deer. These stations then become neighborhood attractants that draw higher spot concentrations of deer than would result from overpopulation alone.

Some communities that have suffered an excess deer population, even including ones that have not undertaken an active control program have chosen to institute passive controls that are intended to eliminate practices which encourage deer. Included in such passive action is legal restriction of deer feeding by citizens.

RECOMMENDATION:

Commissioners should consider enacting a bill that makes local citizen feeding of wild deer illegal with appropriate penalties for violations. (Fox Chapel has proposed such a law with a penalty of \$1000 per day of violation.)

It can be assumed that it is probable that few deer feeders would voluntarily discontinue the practice. However in any given neighborhood, where a deer feeder may be attracting deer to the detriment of objecting neighbors, those neighbors at present have no recourse. Such legal restriction would provide a basis for township action.

CONTROL or TEST AREA

BACKGROUND

In the course of the committee's deliberations, we have noted that a number of citizens are not aware of the impact of our deer herd on their natural woodland range and upon other elements of the overall ecology.

RECOMMENDATION

Both Dr. Gary San Julian of Penn State University and Dr. Paul Curtis of Cornell University have suggested that it might be advisable to construct, in a woodland area such as the Boyce road property, a modest area protected by an exclusion fence.

The exclusion fence should be designed so to keep deer out so that the enclosed area can be allowed to grow and evolve naturally without deer browse damage. It should be built in a naturally brushy grazing type area. A 25' x 50' area enclosed with 7' or 8' woven wire fence should be adequate in their opinion.

The purpose of such a test area is to permit comparison of this undamaged area with the balance of the woodland as a barometer of the degree of deer impact on the overall woodland health, particularly as deer populations may relate to long term ecological balances.

We believe that such a unit could be constructed within the Boyce property in such a location and manner that other public uses would not be significantly impaired.

The Committee recommends that our Township Forester be asked to look into construction and maintenance of such a test area.

We further recommend that he then provide timely periodic test area vs. open woodland reports to the Commissioners or to whichever permanent committee or department is charged with ongoing overview of the community deer program.

LYME DISEASE

BACKGROUND

This is a very debilitating disease with very serious, lifetime-lasting deleterious effects if not treated early. At present there is no known cure once the disease progresses untreated beyond early stages. It is not a reportable disease so accurate statistics are not readily available. Initial symptoms appear similar to other more common diseases further complicating the problem of gathering quality information on onset and infection sources.

The human hazard comes from one of several types of tiny ticks which have most commonly been found to infest deer at their mature stage in infected areas. The juvenile stage of the ticks are hosted by white-footed mice and as it matures, the adult ticks move to larger hosts. It is believed that birds are the region to region carriers of early stages. While it is true that the ticks can reside on smaller mammals, deer appear to be the most feared carrier, possibly because of their larger size (hosting capacity) and/or their much broader ranging habits and/or their browsing habits in residential areas.

A vaccine has just been announced. Given the vagaries of human nature, it is probable that until Lyme disease is a local problem, only those persons frequently in the woods or traveling in seriously affected areas will avail themselves of this vaccine until Lyme disease is a local problem.

Dr. Chaudri, animal related infectious disease specialist with the Allegheny County Health Department, acknowledges that at present, our area has only a statistically insignificant incidence of Lyme Disease.

In the past few years since discovery, Lyme Disease has migrated geographically but in a very unstructured and irregular pattern. Dr. Chaudri's personal opinion is that at some time our Lyme disease incidence rate will increase.

Further, he feels that when that happens, the more deer a community has and the more they range into residential property, the higher that incidence rate will be.

He indicated that he feels strongly that excess deer populations should be reduced before the onset of Lyme disease.

RECOMMENDATION

A committee or staff agency of U.S.C. Township should be charged with the responsibility to stay abreast of the spread of Lyme disease, to correlate deer herd management programs with any changes in the degree of local hazard and to initiate appropriate community communication and education activities when such hazard increase occurs.

BETTER COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS

BACKGROUND

In the course of our committee activity, members have talked individually and collectively to many U.S.C. residents. It has become obvious that there is a great lack of knowledge about various aspects of our deer problem. This information gap is evidenced by lack of awareness of deer damage abatement methods; deer habits as they relate to traffic safety; game regulation and limitations of options to address the core problem of overpopulation, population growth forecasts and other issue areas.

RECOMMENDATION

The Ad Hoc Committee strongly recommends to the Board of Township Commissioners that a comprehensive communications plan be created offering multiple vehicles for ensuring that the public is kept informed of the various issues associated with the whitetail deer problem in our community.

In general, the Committee believes that a comprehensive and ongoing communications program with the community will result in a more informed and educated public. As a result, the public will be in a better position to co-exist with the whitetail deer and in the process hopefully minimize the number of vehicle accidents and excessive damage to property.

The plan should include various means of communication to the public, including the use of Today Magazine, Channel 7, community bulletin boards, community briefings/seminars, Township web site, newsletters, flyers, community events, etc.

The goal is to use a number of approaches to communicate information concerning gardening tips, abatement methods and various other practices that people should follow to minimize, as much as possible, the current problems occurring in the community. In addition, since many of the automobile accidents occur during rutting season, it is also recommended that a special effort be expended during this period of time to warn the public of the potential hazards.

It is recommended that the responsibility for developing and managing such a plan be assigned to a specific Township employee or to an oversight committee to insure its success.

Finally, if the Township Commissioners should decide to institute a culling program, the committee recommends that a specific communications plan regarding the program be constructed and implemented. The intent of such a plan would be to fully inform the public concerning the details of the program, which should minimize misinformation about the structure, management and goals of such a program.

BIRTH CONTROL

This supposed option is often mentioned as the more humane approach to deer population control.

To the best knowledge and understanding of the majority of the committee, this procedure is not currently an option for broad scope population control for a free ranging deer herd in an urban setting such as ours.

Numerous birth control methodologies are currently being explored and evaluated by many wildlife agencies and by numerous universities. They are presently described as experimental only and are not available for community use. When and if they become available, it will most likely only be with the approval of our Game Commission, as well as the federal FDA.

Many wildlife biologists hold little hope that birth control will ever be fully effective on a free ranging herd. Most research today is being done with confined herds.

The process, almost without exception, involves shooting deer with hypodermic darts, most commonly twice the first year and with annual follow-up injections. Some evaluations indicate that there may be undesirable side effects in the psychological and physical health of sterilized deer.

Should birth control become a viable option, it should be noted that experience to date indicates that its manpower requirements are two to five times that of a paid culling program on a per deer basis not including the higher materials costs. The skill level required for sterilization is higher than for culling resulting in an even greater multiple of cost per deer. In addition, more deer need to be sterilized to make up for an estimated 10% migratory population change each year and random failure to duplicate injections to the same deer..

Some archery hunting objectors bring up the hunting safety factor as a basis for not considering hunting. Safety should also be a concern for birth control. The miss rate for darts is probably equal to that for archery and the darts in animals hit are difficult to retrieve as the animals move out when hit. Darts with residual chemicals from hits and full ones from misses are reported to be more difficult to find in woodlands but are a distinctly interesting find for children wandering in the woods. No studies we have seen have addressed this hazard, possibly because most work has been done with confined herds.

Professional deer biologists such as Dr. Gary San Julian of Penn State have indicated an opinion that birth control techniques may never be a suitable method of reducing gross overpopulations but it may at some time in the future become the preferred method of maintaining desired herd levels.

Dr. Priscilla Cohn recently offered to fund "up to \$20,000 for a pilot program" to study the efficacy of PZP as an immunosuppressant. Neither Dr. Cohn nor Dr. Kirkpatrick, who she identified as the controlling technologist for such a program, have responded to questions about how they would go about such a pilot effort as a precursor to a full program for our free ranging herd. Among issues on which committee members were not satisfied were questions about segregation of a test pool of animals, identification of subject deer if uncontained, major cost deviations from various university study group findings, lack of correlation with any of the universities or game agencies publishing information reviewed in committee study and the safety aspects of the meat of deer so treated.

Her restriction of all hunting during such a test was also considered an excessive restriction of community options.

A majority of the committee does not feel Upper St. Clair should wait for developments in this area before taking tangible herd management action on a broad scope.

SPEED LIMIT CHANGES

The Committee debated on the issue of recommending reduction in speed limits as a means of reducing the deer traffic safety hazard and the public cost impacts.

Upper St. Clair currently has approximately 100 reported deer related auto accidents per year. Nearly 40% of them occur on Route 19 (from end to end), 15% along the length of Boyce Road and another 15% on other Pinchot road feeder roads.

Deer are primarily nocturnal. Most ranging for food is done between dusk and dawn. Therefore, the majority of accidents occur during that time.

In addition, deer roam more broadly during the fall rutting season resulting in higher accident rates at that time of year.

There are few specific and identified locations with accident rates that would appear to warrant changes in our speed limits from those presently in place.

While we do not have comparable figures for Upper St. Clair, it should be noted that Bethel Park has found that 50% of their deer accidents are from deer running into the side of vehicles rather than vehicles hitting deer.

The Committee does not recommend any change in existing speed limits.

We do however feel that our Police Department should be asked to more stringently enforce existing speed laws during the above higher accident periods particularly in the higher hazard areas of Route 19 and Boyce Road..

COMMON OBJECTIONS

"LET NATURE TAKE CARE OF THE OVERPOPULATION"

Persons opposed to a herd culling program and to hunting in general do not deny that in an urban area, with inviting vegetation and significant wooded acreage, a deer herd will continue to multiply to and beyond the point of exhaustion of the total food supply.

This has been demonstrated in a number of locations such as the locales on Long Island mentioned by Dr. Curtis in his presentation. Biologists have been surprised at the end population levels at that point, well over 200 per square mile. (Let us remember that a square mile contains 640 acres.)

At that point of food supply exhaustion, most of the deer herd will suffer from malnutrition; starvation will be common particularly in the young; adult growth will be stunted; they will be easily susceptible to disease and as they range farther and farther for food, more roadway crossings will mean more auto fatalities. In addition, there will be many parallel losses in other wildlife and woodland survival will be threatened.

When asked if allowing a deer herd to suffer these effects is not more inhumane than a culling program, the animal rights response is "Well, that's nature."

Even that is not truly fact.

In a state such as Pennsylvania, with no humans present, part of the region would be tall hardwood climax forests with little understory and part would be open grasslands, both not natural deer habitat. We would also have some areas of developing woods with much low brush growth that is the deer's natural forage.

In that latter area we would also have a number of carnivores such as wolves, cougars, foxes, panthers, etc... who dine on less aggressive creatures such as birds, small mammals and deer. Those carnivores unintentionally act to insure survival of the fittest as they naturally eliminate both the old and infirm but more importantly the less capable of the young. This is nature's way of assuring ecological balance.

It is not nature's way for an excessive number of young to continue to grow to adulthood to the point of deterioration of the entire herd's health.

Densely developed cities in the "trolley era" were not invitations to deer herd growth. Man did create a survival trap for deer when we began to build suburbia with its resemblance to natural, browse lush habitat. We eliminated

most of the natural predators. We planted brushy landscaping plants and small trees; we left partially open areas mixed with some woods and we created a veritable buffet of far more succulent small plantings than found in nature.

We have created the environment that encourages deer population increases. We have disrupted nature so we should take responsibility for what has occurred. We should therefore take responsibility for managing the deer population in total for the health of the overall herd and for overall ecologic balance.

"HUNTING DOES NOT REDUCE DEER POPULATION"

AN OBJECTION

The above phrase is an often repeated claim of those opposed to using hunting in any form as a means of reducing excess deer herd numbers. Numerous statistics are quoted and published reports offered as proof.

In documented cases submitted to the committee, the studies quoted are generally based upon experiences in woodland areas with hunting only by sport hunters under state specific seasonal and licensing limitations or other non-comparable conditions.

Antlered bucks are preferred quarry by many hunters which biases gender related results. Since a single buck can service a relatively unlimited number of does, killing bucks does not significantly affect deer population.

In most states doe seasons and licensing are regulated by game commissions as their primary means of managing deer herd sizes for both ecological balance and as a renewable resource for sport hunting.

We note that those who use the title objection do not say that "a CONTROLLED hunt," one focused specifically on herd number control, does not reduce deer population.

A controlled hunt should focus essentially upon culling of mature does.

We have only to look at the results in Fox Chapel whose problems parallel ours and who have been practicing a controlled hunt program for five years. They have experienced major reductions in auto accident rates, vastly reduced citizen complaints and woodland regeneration beginning with significant deer population reduction.

Detractors say "look at Bethel Park where the accident rate has remained the same after they began hunting." Biologists point out clearly that a culling program must be a multi-year program as the first visible result is to level the rate of herd growth as a precursor to herd reduction. That leveling is what happened in Bethel Park. Who is to say how much larger their deer population would have grown or what the accident rate would have been without herd reduction?

SUGGESTED DRAFT - OPEN LETTER FOR LOCAL PUBLICATION

An open letter to Upper St. Clair residents,

Two years ago, over two thirds of you who answered the community questionnaire asked the then Board of Commissioners to do something about your deer problems.

In the interim the Board had a number of discussions and heard from several experts without reaching a conclusion.

In March of this year, this Board appointed a five person Ad Hoc Committee to look into the alternatives to resolving the various problems you have reported and to recommend actions which we might take to alleviate them.

We have now received their report.

Neither the committee nor the Board wants or intends to totally eliminate deer from our community. They are woodland resources which we all enjoy in their places.

The committee has also recommended improvement of roadway maintenance and installation of a trial of deer warning reflectors to improve traffic safety, expanded communications to the public about defensive actions to minimize deer damage, proscription of deer feeding and installation of a woodland test site.

At the core of their report was a recommendation that we authorize creation of a controlled archery hunting program designed to lower overall deer numbers.

In studying this subject, the committee found that alternatives such as birth control and trapping and transporting animals were neither legally permissible nor would they be considered economically viable at this time. For your information, an archery hunt is the only allowable legal "first step" in an overt herd reduction program.

We have approved such an archery herd reduction program.

We know this is a controversial decision, but we want to assure you that rules are being established that will limit hunters to high skill levels, will maximize safety practices and will make this program as invisible to the public as possible.

In addition, certainly not the primary objective of the program, but a corollary benefit will be the generation of significant quantities of meat being made available to food pantries and to those with processed food allergies.

We are confident that we have acted in the best interests of the majority of our residents and we hope that we will have your support of the objectives of the program.

Board of Commissioners
Upper St. Clair Township