

Readington Township Deer Management Program

08.16.2021

White-tailed deer have reached problematic numbers in Readington Township and throughout New Jersey. Increased deer-vehicle collisions, increased health concerns, damage to ornamental plantings and gardens, damage to agricultural crops and destruction of the natural forest ecosystem are some of the problems associated with high deer populations.

In the early spring of 2019, with the help of a grant, Readington commissioned the services of Raritan Valley Community College's Center for Environmental Studies to conduct a white-tailed deer survey in town. Spotlight surveys were conducted throughout the townships road system as well as infrared drone surveys of Township open space parcels.

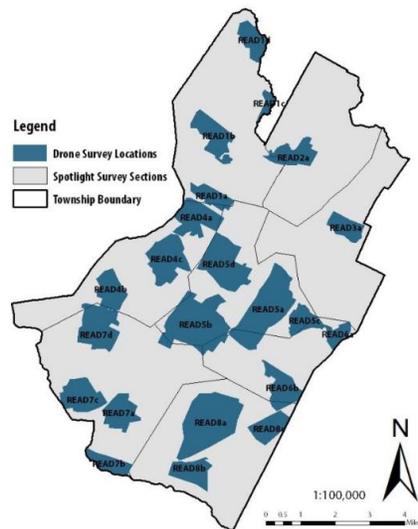


Figure 1: Areas in Readington Twp. surveyed

The results from Readington Township in 2019 show deer densities (132-136 deer/mi²) to be far higher than historical levels, statewide averages, and those needed to maintain ecosystem health. Studies show that densities above 10 deer/mi² have detrimental effects to forest regeneration, bird communities, invertebrates, and a host of other ecosystem variables. This confirms that Readington Township has 13.5 times the number of deer we should have.



Figure 2: (Left) Over browsed forest understorey; (Right) Healthy forest understorey

As the steward of over 4,400 acres of open space in one of the most densely populated deer counties in the State, Readington has an obligation to implement economically responsible deer management practices. In 2019, the

Township established the Wildlife Advisory Subcommittee chaired by Adam Mueller. The subcommittee developed a hunter-based deer management program in consultation with state officials and industry professionals that the Township Committee ultimately approved. Readington’s program has been viewed as a model for several neighboring towns who have adopted Readington’s plan. Readington currently has ~1,400 acres available to a combination of hunting clubs and individual permit holders with a program focus on reducing the deer population.

Our 2020/2021 season wrapped up February 20th with 20 individual hunters and 5 clubs harvesting 193 deer. This accounts for nearly 20% of all deer harvested in Readington as reported by the Division of Fish & Wildlife with the remaining deer coming from private, County, or State properties. Equally if not more importantly, our individual permit holders increased their harvest by 263% over previous season’s harvest data! Many of the deer harvested are donated to local food banks through the Hunter Helping the Hungry program, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Last season, hunters donated 33,574 lbs. of venison throughout the state, which yielded 134,296 servings to help feed those in need. As the 2021/2022 deer season gears up, Readington is preparing for another successful year. The season officially starts September 11th and continues until late February.

2021/2022 Deer Hunting Seasons	
Fall Bow:	9/11/21 to 10/29/21
Youth Bow Hunt:	9/25/21
Permit Bow:	10/30/21 to 12/31/21
Youth Firearm Hunt:	11/20/21
Permit Firearms:	11/22/21 to 2/12/22
Six-day Firearm:	12/6/21-12/11/21
Winter Bow:	1/1/22 to 2/19/22

Figure 3: 2021/2022 Deer Hunting Seasons

Property	Block / Lot
Cole Rd. (West)	52.01 / 14.06
Cole Rd. (East)	66 / 2, 3
Dreahook Rd. (Indian Purchase)	25 / 50
Pine Bank Rd. (Lachenmayr)	55 / 13.51
Pleasant Run Rd. (Cole Rd East)	66 / 13
Pleasant Run Rd. (Hoagland trailhead)	75 / 19.01
Pleasant Run Rd. (Route 202 N)	96 / 18.03
Summer Rd. (Lazy Brook Greenway)	94 / 8
Woodschurch Rd. (Dobozynski)	63 / 19, 64
Woodschurch Rd. (Round Mtn)	63 / 24,27,66,68
East Whitehouse	13/54,34.01,31
Rt 22 (West of Rockaway Creek)	21/30
Merck (Rt. 523)	9/1
Summer Road	75/15.01,16.02
Holland Brook Headwaters (Dreahook	45/26.06
Gallo (Ridge Rd.)	39/10
Chambers Brook	39/14.02
Saums (Rockafellows Mills Rd.)	74/4.05
Rt. 202 South	76/3,3.01
County 523 (Vislocky)	25/19,20
Fitzgerald (Coddington Rd.)	38/38.01
Thor Solberg Rd	57/2
Dreahook Rd. (8.5 Acres)	44/4.03
Dreahook Rd. (22 Acres)	44/4.04
E. Whitehouse	13/21
River Trail (Deer Path)	72/36.99

Figure 4: 2021/2022 Hunted Properties

All properties will have signage at the trail heads as well as around the perimeter of the property. Each property remains fully open to the public, but visitors are reminded of the following:

- Know when hunting seasons are. Continue to use the open spaces but learn about where and when hunting is taking place.
- Wear bright clothing. Make yourself more visible. Choose colors that stand out, like red, orange or bright green, and avoid white, blacks, browns, earth-toned greens and animal-colored clothing. Orange vests and hats are advisable.
- Readington has instituted a "quiet time" for firearms between the hours of 10 AM – 3 PM except for Saturdays, 6-Day Firearms Season, and properties without posted trails.
- Don't forget to protect your 4-legged friends. Keep your dog on a leash and get an orange vest for your dog if he/she accompanies you.
- Make noise. Whistle, sing or carry on a conversation as you walk to alert hunters to your presence. Sound carries well and hunters should be listening for any sounds of animal movement.
- Make yourself known. If you do hear shooting, raise your voice and let hunters know that you are in the vicinity.
- Be courteous. Once a hunter is aware of your presence, don't make unnecessary noise to disturb wildlife. Avoid confrontations.
- Know your own comfort level. If hunting makes you uneasy, choose a hike in a location where hunting is not allowed or schedule your outings for Sundays.



Figure 5: Proper attire during hunting season

Regulated hunting has proven to be an effective deer population management tool. In addition, it has been shown to be the most efficient and least expensive technique for removing deer and maintaining deer at desired levels. Wildlife management agencies recognize deer hunting as the most effective, practical, and flexible method available for regional deer population management, and therefore rely on it as their primary management tool. One-hundred years of research and management experience throughout the United States has shown regulated hunting to be an ecologically sound, socially beneficial, and fiscally responsible method of managing deer populations. Options routinely suggested as alternatives to regulated hunting are typically limited in applicability, prohibitively expensive, logistically impractical, or technically infeasible. As a consequence, wildlife professionals have come to recognize regulated hunting as the fundamental basis of successful deer management.