

Special Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting
to be held via Zoom and in person in Room B – City Hall
Tuesday, September 15, 2026
at 10:00 a.m.

1. **Call Committee Meeting to Order**
We acknowledge that Penticton, where we live and work, is on the traditional lands of the Syilx People in the Okanagan Nation.
2. **Adoption of Agenda**
3. **Adoption of Minutes**
 - 3.1 Minutes of the June 24, 2026 Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting
Recommendation:
THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee adopt the minutes of the June 24, 2026, meeting as presented.
4. **New Business**
 - Laven 4.1 Final Draft Urban Deer Management Strategy for Endorsement
Recommendation
THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee endorse the "Draft City of Penticton Urban Deer Management Strategy" attached as Attachment A;

AND THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee recommend to Council to receive the Draft Strategy and make the document available for public comment prior to final endorsement and implementation;

AND THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee recommend to Council that the City proceed with a deer count this fall as recommended by the Draft Strategy.
5. **Adjournment**

Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting
held via Zoom and in person in Room B – City Hall
Wednesday, June 24, 2026
at 9:30 a.m.

Present: Joni Reimer, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, Vice-Chair
Sioban Darlington, BC Government Wildlife Sector (via Zoom)
Andrea Wallace, BC SPCA (via Zoom)
Maryse Pellerin, Community Member
Maryssa Bonneau, Penticton Indian Band (via Zoom)
Jodi McKay, BC Wildlife Federation

Regrets: Dan Chetner, Biologist, Chair
Wilbert Borren, Community Member
Jasmine Han, Community Member
Jason Reynen, Councillor

Staff: Blake Laven, General Manager of Development Services
Janet Glowa, Legislative Assistant

1. Call to Order

The Vice-Chair called the Urban Deer Advisory Committee to order at 9:32 a.m.

2. Adoption of Agenda

It was MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee adopt the agenda of June 24, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. Adoption of Minutes

It was MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee adopt the minutes of the May 27, 2026 meeting as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. New Business

4.1 Draft Urban Deer Management Strategy for Committee Feedback

The General Manager of Development Services presented the draft Urban Deer Management Strategy for Committee review and feedback.

5. Next Meeting

The next regular Urban Deer Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for July 29, 2026 at 9:30 am via Zoom and in-person.

6. Adjournment

It was MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee adjourn the meeting held on June 24, 2026 at 11:02 a.m.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Certified Correct:

Janet Glowa
Legislative Assistant



Memo to Committee

penticton.ca

Date: September 15, 2026
To: Urban Deer Advisory Committee
From: Blake Laven, General Manager of Development Services
Subject: Final Draft Urban Deer Management Strategy for Endorsement

File No: RMS 0540-20

Staff Recommendations

THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee endorse the "Draft City of Penticton Urban Deer Management Strategy" attached as Attachment A;

AND THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee recommend to Council to receive the Draft Strategy and make the document available for public comment prior to final endorsement and implementation;

AND THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee recommend to Council that the City proceed with a deer count this fall as recommended by the Draft Strategy.

Background

At the June 24, Committee meeting, staff presented the Draft Urban Deer Management Strategy for committee review and comment. The meeting focused on a detailed review of the document, during which committee members provided feedback and suggested revisions.

Following the meeting, a collaborative Google document was established to facilitate further review. The revised draft was shared with all committee members, allowing additional comments, amendments, and recommendations to be submitted. The document was available for comment from July 6th to July 24th.

Since that time, staff have consolidated the committee's feedback and incorporated the recommended changes into a consolidated draft. A professional document designer was then engaged to format the content into the draft strategy presented today and attached as Attachment A.

Proposal

Staff are seeking the Committee's endorsement of the draft Urban Deer Management Strategy.

Following committee endorsement, the draft strategy will be presented to Council for consideration and released for public review and comment. Feedback received through the public engagement process will be incorporated, as appropriate, before the strategy is returned to Council for final consideration and adoption.

Staff are also seeking a recommendation from the Committee that the City begin planning and implementing a fall deer population count, as recommended in the strategy. This would serve as an early

implementation initiative and would proceed while the public review process and final Council consideration are underway.

Analysis

The attached draft Urban Deer Management Strategy represents the culmination of the Committee's work over the past year. Through seven committee meetings, members developed a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with urban deer management in Penticton. This work included learning about deer ecology and behaviour, exploring Indigenous perspectives on wildlife stewardship and deer management, and reviewing approaches used by other communities to balance wildlife management objectives with public safety and community needs.

The draft strategy has been developed through a collaborative process that provided all committee members with opportunities to contribute feedback, propose amendments, and help shape the document.

Following endorsement, the draft strategy will be released for public review and comment, allowing residents, stakeholder organizations, and interested parties to provide input prior to final consideration by Council.

Staff Recommendations

Staff are recommending that the Committee Endorse the draft Urban Deer Management Strategy, pass a resolution recommending that Council receive the draft strategy and authorize its release for public review and comment and recommend that the City proceed with planning and implementing a fall deer population count, as identified in the strategy, as an early implementation initiative while the public engagement process and final Council consideration are underway.

Attachments

Attachment A: DRAFT City of Penticton Urban Deer Management Strategy

Respectfully submitted,

Blake Laven,
General Manager of Development Services

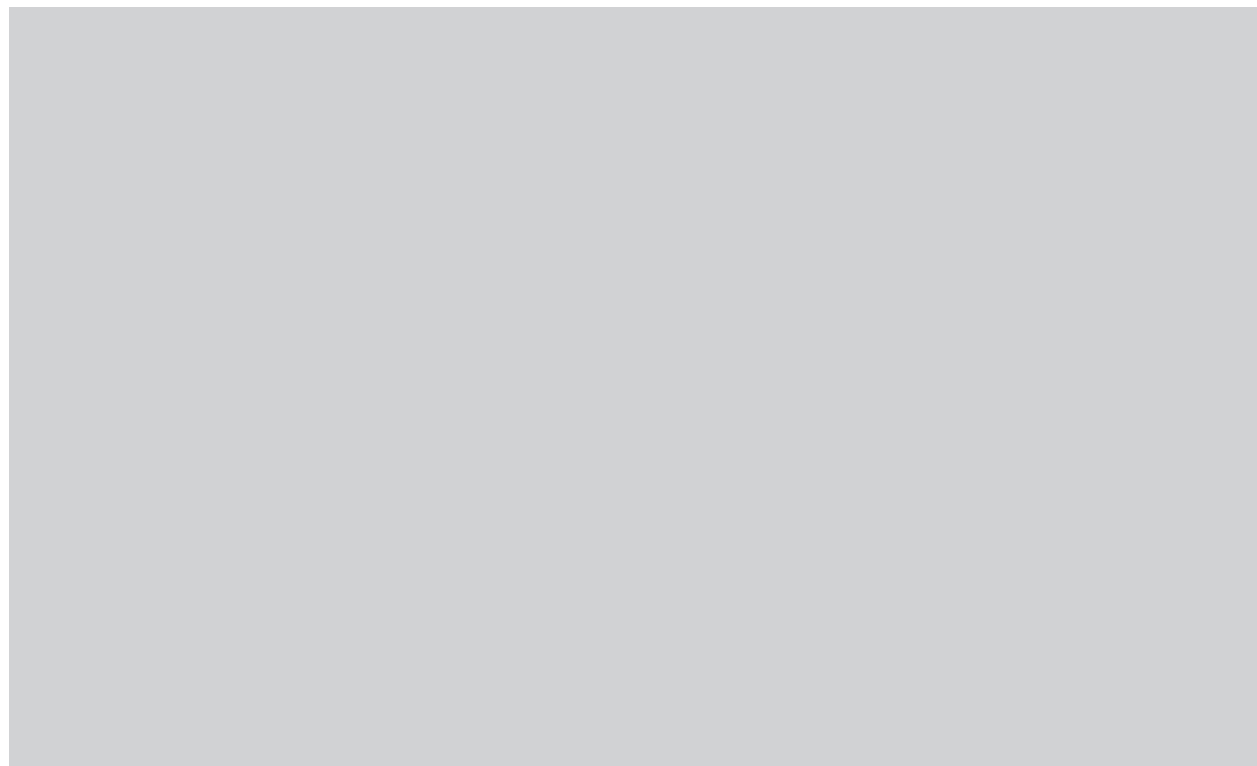
Draft URBAN DEER

MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



SEPTEMBER 2026





MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the Penticton Urban Deer Advisory Committee, I am pleased to present the City of Penticton's Urban Deer Management Strategy.

This strategy represents the culmination of many months of discussion, research, learning, and collaboration by a committee made up of individuals with diverse backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives on urban deer management. Committee members brought a range of viewpoints to the table, including wildlife management, animal welfare, Indigenous stewardship, local government, and community interests. While opinions sometimes differed, members worked respectfully and constructively toward a common goal.

I am proud of the work undertaken by the committee and the commitment demonstrated throughout this process. Our discussions were informed by scientific research, expert presentations, local experience, and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. The result

is a balanced, evidence-based strategy that reflects both the complexity of the issue and the values of our community.

Urban deer management is not about finding a single solution. It is about understanding and managing the relationship between people and wildlife in a way that promotes public safety, protects ecological integrity, respects Indigenous perspectives, and supports informed decision-making. This strategy establishes a practical framework for monitoring conditions, reducing conflicts, and guiding future actions based on evidence and community needs.

I would like to thank all committee members, staff, presenters, and Indigenous representatives who contributed their time, knowledge, and perspectives. Through collaboration and a shared commitment to the community, the committee was able to reach broad consensus on a path forward for Penticton.

- Dan Chetner, Biologist



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1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Urban Deer Management Strategy is to manage the urban deer population in Penticton in a manner that enhances public safety, educates the public, protects ecological integrity, and maintains a balanced and sustainable population.

This will be achieved through evidence-based decision-making, application of best management practices, and ongoing monitoring, while respecting community values and incorporating Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and caretakership principles.



2 BACKGROUND

Penticton is located within Syilx territory, where snpink'tn culture carries responsibilities for tmix^w (all living things), including deer. From this perspective, deer are regarded as relatives and providers, and this understanding needs to inform any approach to managing urban deer, as Penticton has obligations and has made commitments to honouring and respecting snpink'tn culture.

These obligations are not symbolic. They include the honour of the Crown, the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as adopted into provincial law through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), and the City's own stated commitments to reconciliation. This strategy operationalizes those commitments in Sections 6 and 7 through a guaranteed snpink'tn seat on the implementation working group and a defined consultation step preceding any population reduction decision, rather than treating consultation as concluded once the strategy is adopted.

Deer are wildlife that have become comfortable in the urban areas of Penticton. The prevalence of urban deer in Penticton is not a new phenomenon. Over time, deer have adapted to living within the city, where they find a comfortable environment with abundant food sources and few natural predators, allowing them to increase in numbers over successive generations. As the City continues to densify and grow and deer have fewer places to feed and exist, we are seeing more instances of conflict between deer and people and pets.

This strategy strives to bring balance to this situation.

While generally docile, deer can exhibit defensive behaviour during rutting season (fall) and fawning season (spring). They also pose risks to motorists and can become confrontational around pets and even

people as they lose their natural wariness of humans, having lived in an urban setting for generations.

In addition to safety concerns, deer can cause significant damage to residential and public landscaping and agricultural crops. Many agricultural properties have responded by installing six-foot-high deer fencing, which, while effective in keeping deer out of their individual properties, can inadvertently exacerbate the issue by altering movement patterns and concentrating deer in urban areas. These negative interactions tend to increase as deer populations grow.

Although local government is often the first point of contact for residents experiencing negative interactions with deer, municipalities have limited authority to manage wildlife. In British Columbia, deer are considered wildlife under provincial law and are legally classified as property of the Crown and are managed by the province under legislation such as the Wildlife Act. Any actions to control populations, such as culls, relocations, or other interventions, require provincial authorization because municipalities do not have direct authority over wildlife management.

Despite these jurisdictional realities – provincial Crown authority over wildlife and the snpink'tn responsibilities – the public continues to look to the City for leadership on this issue, which is where this strategy has come about.

3 DEER AS A SPECIES

There are two main species of deer in the Okanagan and in Penticton:



Photo credit: Siohban Darlington

Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*):

The most prevalent in the Okanagan. These deer have large ears (mule like), with a white rump patch and black-tipped tail.



Photo credit: David Bell

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*):

Expanding their range in the Okanagan but not nearly as prevalent as mule deer. These deer are recognized by the white underside of the tail.

Deer are crepuscular, most active from dawn to dusk, but often enjoy mid-day rests.

In the spring and summer months, deer focus on high-quality foliage and in the fall see movement increase, especially for males. In the winter they work on energy conservation and sheltering, with a diet focused more on woody plants.

Deer are generalists with regard to their diet. They eat shrubs, leaves, fruit and ornamental plants (Berry et al. 2019) and prefer to be in 'edge habitats' like forest edges, including urban wildlife interface areas (Heffelfinger and Krausman 2023). Artificial food sources have low nutritional value for deer, and negatively impact deer health (Heffelfinger and Krausman 2023). Deer learn quickly, have strong spatial memory, and will return to reliable food sources (Merkle et al. 2019).

Does (female deer) live in matrilineal groups (family units) with strong site fidelity, meaning they do not travel much from their home area (Blood, 2000).

They pass on their movement patterns to their fawns (baby deer).

Bucks (male deer) are generally more solitary than does and typically occupy larger home ranges. During the breeding season (rut), bucks compete for access to females, with older and more dominant individuals generally achieving greater breeding success. Because a single buck may mate with multiple does, bucks become increasingly mobile during the rut as they search for mates and engage in competition with other males.

With regard to reproduction and mating, the rut season is generally October to December for our region (Robinette et al. 1973). Does generally breed after their first or second year of life and have a gestation period of ~200 days (Robinette et al. 1973), with fawns born from mid-May to mid-June in the southern interior of British Columbia (Wright, 2025). Does usually have 1-2 fawns per year. Overall deer have a high reproductive capacity especially in urban areas where food is abundant and there are few predators (Andelt et al. 2004).

A small number of bucks can maintain high reproduction rates. The implication is that removing does is more effective for population control than removing bucks.

Deer Population Dynamics and Urban Context

In natural environments, deer populations are largely regulated by the availability of food and the survival rates of does, which are influenced by predation and environmental conditions. In contrast, urban environments tend to create ideal conditions for population growth and high deer survival rates (Rudolph et al. 2011). Deer in these settings benefit from abundant and reliable food sources (landscaping, irrigated vegetation), reduced predation, and the ability to maintain smaller home ranges (Rudolph et al. 2011).

Determining what constitutes a “healthy” number of deer in an urban environment is inherently challenging. Unlike in forested systems, there is no widely accepted best practice or target density for urban deer populations. Acceptable population levels are highly context-specific and depend on community tolerance as well as urban form. For example, neighbourhoods with extensive green space, wildlife corridors, and

naturalized areas may support and tolerate higher deer presence than more densely developed areas with limited habitat and predominantly private landscapes (Westerfield et al. 2019).

Studies suggest that ecological balance in natural systems may occur at approximately 4–6 deer per square kilometre, with measurable impacts to vegetation and regeneration beginning above roughly 7–10 deer per square kilometre, and becoming more pronounced at higher densities (Rooney 2001). However, in urban contexts, deer can persist at much higher densities due to artificial food sources and the absence of limiting factors such as predation. Deer densities in urban environments across North America are generally considered ‘overabundant’ by wildlife managers between 20–50 deer per square kilometre (Stapp and Guttilla 2006; Furnas et al. 2020), depending on human population density, road density, social tolerance, geography, associated impacts (i.e. conflict rates, damage to ecosystems), and other factors.

In urban deer management, the focus is therefore not on achieving a specific population density, but on mitigating and managing the impacts of deer and the level of conflict experienced by the community. A fixed numerical threshold is not a particularly useful



tool for defining the problem or determining when intervention is warranted. In addition, changes in how people value animals have prompted widespread recognition of the need for ethical and evidence-based approaches to managing human-wildlife conflicts (Dubois et al., 2017).

To meet this need, best practice is to establish impact-based triggers, rather than a purely numerical or density target, to guide management decisions. These impacted-based metrics may include:

- Trends in deer-vehicle collisions, and efforts to mitigate these
- Frequency and spatial concentration of public complaints
- Documented damage to landscaping, agriculture, and natural areas, and efforts to mitigate this
- Evidence of ecological impacts in parks and naturalized spaces

Establishing a robust local baseline is critical to this approach and forms the basis of the strategy.

Establishing the local baseline includes tracking and maintaining data of the following metrics:

- Deer-vehicle collision data
- Complaint volumes
- Location data (preferably mapped) of deer-vehicle collisions, where complaints are coming in and where deer are found during deer counts
- Observed deer abundance (through surveys or counts)
- Indicators of ecological or landscape damage
- Seasonal and behavioural observations documented through snpink'tn and syilx knowledge holders, offered as a complementary indicator where the community chooses to share them

Monitoring these indicators over time allows the municipality to identify trends, assess whether conditions are improving or deteriorating, evaluate education/outreach and conflict mitigation efforts, and determine when further intervention or management actions may be required.

At present, the City of Penticton does not keep regular statistics on these metrics nor has the City conducted formal deer population estimates (counts). The overall population size remains uncertain as part of this review process. The last recorded deer count conducted in Penticton was done by City staff over single day counts in 2012 and found 20 deer in the community in the Spring and 49 in the fall.

Current understanding of the urban deer population in Penticton is based largely on anecdotal observations, including perceptions that deer numbers are increasing or that the issue is worsening.

As part of this strategy implementation, it will be important to identify and implement a consistent monitoring program and data collection process to establish a reliable evidence base for future decision-making regarding population management.





4 FRAMING THE PROBLEM LOCALLY

Council and City staff regularly receive calls from the public about negative interactions with urban deer. These include defensive deer during fawning or rutting season, interactions with pets, damage to landscaping, deer droppings in inconvenient places, dead deer, injured deer, vehicle collisions with deer.

Data from the local Conservation Office and local Bylaw Office provide some useful insight into the issue locally. The following data represents calls from Penticton regarding deer:

- In 2024, 354 calls about urban deer in Penticton; 48 were attended by conservation officers.
- Approximately 15% of calls were for defensive deer (50 of 354).
- 24 deer were destroyed due to injury or vehicle collisions – not due to aggression.
- Since 2020, Bylaw services responded to 15 deer feeding complaints.
- In 2024, two defensive deer complaints were received during fawning season.

The City receives many concerns during fawning and rutting season about interactions between people and deer and receive calls throughout the year about deer damaging landscaping. During fawning season,

calls are also received about orphaned deer.

Deer impact park and public realm plant material, through feeding on the plants and shedding their antler velvet on tree trunks. Measures are taken to mitigate damage by selective fencing, and selecting plants that deer are thought not to like.

Operations staff also deal with deceased deer, which are usually the result of deer and vehicle collisions. Deer carcass removal has remained consistent the past 10 years. Calls for service dealing with deer has likewise remained constant over the past 10 years with an average of 70 calls a year (a high of 157 were received in 2020 and a low of 27 in 2015. 2024 saw 43).

While these problems are manageable, there is a desire from the public for the City to take a greater role on overall urban deer management.

5 THE JOURNEY

Urban Deer Advisory Committee and strategy development

Given this context, Penticton City Council established an Urban Deer Advisory Committee to provide advice and support in the development of this strategy. The Committee's Terms of Reference included a diverse membership representing wildlife biologists, government and non-government organizations, animal welfare interests, including the SPCA, and members of the public.

The Terms of Reference also explicitly recognized the importance of Indigenous perspectives on deer and their role within the local landscape. To support this objective, membership was structured to provide opportunities for Indigenous participation and

contributions throughout the strategy development process, ensuring that cultural knowledge, values, and perspectives were considered alongside scientific, operational, and community viewpoints.

The Advisory Committee has met several times over 2025 and 2026.

The Committee was provided with an Indigenous perspective on deer, their cultural significance, and their place within the shared landscape. Committee members recognized that this perspective should continue to inform deer management beyond the development of this strategy.

From James Pepper, Natural Resources Director from the Penticton Indian Band:

"Their presence in cities reflects how the land has been altered through urban development, including habitat loss, removal of predators, fragmented movement corridors, and landscaping practices that provide abundant food. Deer are smart and they are responding to conditions humans have created. Deer are tmix™, part of all living things, and exist within a system of reciprocal relationships. Humans are not separate from this system. We all carry responsibility for the outcomes of land use decisions. Addressing urban deer therefore requires looking beyond population numbers and considering why urban environments now support and concentrate deer. Meaningful action begins with addressing root causes and we know what those are so these actions should include restoring ecological function where possible, reconnecting movement corridors, reducing attractants in residential areas, and designing urban spaces that better reflect ecological realities. Public education is essential, particularly around feeding and other interactions, landscaping choices, and unintended impacts."



To support continuous and ongoing Indigenous participation, Section 7 establishes a permanent seat for the snpink'tn (Penticton Indian Band) on the Deer Management Working Group responsible for overseeing implementation of the strategy. This will ensure that Indigenous knowledge and perspectives remain integrated into program monitoring, evaluation of management triggers, and consideration of any future population reduction measures, rather than being limited to the strategy development process.

The Committee received input from three delegations who shared their experiences and expertise: Dr. Jason Fisher (University of Victoria), Kindry Dalke (Town of

Invermere), Chris Zettel (City of Cranbrook), Gemma Almendros, Biologist, snpink'tn Indian Band and Matt MacPherson from the Okanagan Nation Alliance.

Drawing on insights from these presentations, as well as research and lessons learned from other communities, a best-practice approach has been identified. The strategy developed here builds on this collective knowledge and experience.

The Advisory Committee also met to workshop ideas, which informed and helped shape the development of this strategy.

6 THE STRATEGY

The Urban Deer Management Strategy takes an approach based on scientific study and follows provincial regulation and best practices.

6.1 Data Collection and Monitoring

This strategy is intended to be data-informed. The Committee identified a current lack of reliable data on urban deer populations, as well as the absence of consistent processes for recording and classifying deer-related incidents. Addressing these gaps is essential to support effective decision-making and long-term management.

Regular and standardized data collection will establish baseline information on both deer population levels and the frequency and nature of human–deer interactions. This will require strengthened partnerships with the Conservation Officer Service and the implementation of revised internal procedures to consistently track, categorize, and report deer-related calls. Over time, this data will support trend analysis and help evaluate the effectiveness of education/outreach, mitigation strategies, and other management actions.

A key component of the data collection program will be the implementation of a biannual deer count. The count will be conducted in the fall and spring to capture seasonal variations in deer presence and behaviour. This initiative will be municipally funded and coordinated, with support from trained community volunteers.

For the purposes of the deer count, the community will be divided into geographic quadrants. Volunteer teams of two will be assigned to each area to conduct observations. Data collected during counts will include group size, deer type, sex, approximate age, and general condition.

Example of deer count collection data

- *Species/type:* (mule deer, white tailed deer)
- *Sex:* Male (buck), female (doe)
- *Age class:* Fawn, Yearling, Adult
- *Physical condition:* Healthy, thin/underweight, injured/sick

To ensure data quality and consistency, all volunteers will receive training and guidance prior to participating. In addition, opportunities to partner with local colleges or universities will be explored to support program design, data analysis, and ongoing monitoring, helping to align the program with scientific best practices.

Other data that will be key to collect include:

- Vehicle deer collisions: this data will come from ICBC
- Calls in to the City regarding deer interactions. This will be classified into the following categories: damage to landscaping, deer droppings, defensive deer, injured deer or miscellaneous
- Public perceptions: Include a question about deer on the citizen survey to monitor over time
- Traditional and community knowledge: with the consent and voluntary participation of snpink'tn and other syilx knowledge holders, seasonal observations of deer movement, condition, and behaviour informed by traditional knowledge will be invited as a complementary indicator set alongside the biological data above, not a replacement for it

This data will be compiled into an annual report which will be kept on the City's website and publicly viewable.

6.2 Communication and Public Education

This strategy recommends the creation of a full urban deer communication plan to be managed by the City of Penticton Communications Department. The communications plan will focus on educating the public on urban deer, their behaviour and living with deer, including:

6.2.1 Maintain an urban deer webpage

Maintain an urban deer webpage to include this strategy as well as information about deer and information on the following:

- conflict management
- landscaping
- fencing tips and bylaw regulations (i.e., fence heights)
- harms of feeding deer, particularly fawns
- normal deer behaviour and issues with accidental fawn-napping
- Best practices for preventing and avoiding conflict with deer

6.2.2 Targeted information

Targeted information during rutting and fawning seasons. Regular public safety bulletin and media release and social media during these two times of the year advising the public to be vigilant and give space.

6.2.3 Targeted Signage

Targeted signage in areas with incidents of defensive deer, in the form of permanently installed signage or temporary sandwich board. This will be the job of the City to erect this signage based on reports from the public.

6.2.4 Endearing the Community to the Urban Deer Population

Efforts through communication campaigns should be made to help people understand the local deer population better and find joy in the relationship with urban deer. The rationale is that people will be more tolerant once they get to know the deer that are in their region and neighbourhood. This may be the form of an adopt a deer program or naming program or interactive mapping tool to track and describe deer.

6.2.5 Orphaned fawns

Calls are occasionally received regarding young deer (fawns) that appear to have been orphaned because they are observed alone for extended periods. Responding to these calls begins with educating residents about normal deer behaviour, particularly that of does (adult female deer). It is common for does to leave their fawns alone for several hours while they forage, returning periodically to nurse and care for them. In most cases, a fawn found alone has not been abandoned and does not require intervention.

In some situations, however, a fawn may be genuinely orphaned if its mother has been injured, killed, or is otherwise unable to care for it. In these cases, assistance from a licensed wildlife rehabilitation centre may be required. Residents should never attempt to adopt, feed, handle, or otherwise care for a fawn, as this can reduce its chances of survival and is contrary to wildlife regulations.

Where there are concerns about an orphaned or injured fawn, residents should be advised to contact the BC Conservation Officer Service or local wildlife rehabilitation centre for guidance. To support consistent public messaging, a fact sheet should be developed outlining appropriate actions, key information about deer behaviour, and contact information for relevant agencies. Staff responsible for receiving and responding to these calls should also be provided with the necessary information and resources to effectively assist the public.

Schools should be targeted for information to educate school age kids on living with deer and their importance to the local ecosystem.

6.3 Urban Design

Following the practice of respecting the environments that deer live in, urban design considerations should be in place to ensure comfort for the deer and encourage deer into appropriate areas and away from inappropriate areas. These include the following urban design interventions:

- Reduce speeds and design roads to reduce speed in areas where deer and vehicle collisions occur.
- Ensure plants of deer-friendly varieties are in areas where deer are acceptable like wildlife corridors and natural areas to keep deer in these areas. Look at non-invasive species that deer have an aversion to in Class A and other parks.
- Include more wildlife corridors and habitat for deer, ensuring areas like the creek walkway are wide and provide abundant vegetation and deer habitat to encourage deer in these areas.
- Educate the public on non-invasive plant species that deer have an aversion to and how to fortify their yard spaces from deer.
- Public signage program
- The deer feeding bylaw should be amended to deal with unintentional feeding

6.4 Population Management

Population reduction should not be the main objective of urban deer management and should be seen as a last resort measure if other management steps have not been effective. Any deer cull or other population reduction initiatives (trans-relocation), should be supported with clearly documented evidence and follow the guidance of this strategy.

Before population reduction should be considered, accurate deer counts and data collection as envisioned by this strategy should be conducted for

a minimum 3 year period to understand a baseline condition and trend to which decision can be made.

6.4.1 Conditions for Considering Deer Population Reduction

Population reduction measures may be considered when multiple indicators demonstrate increasing impacts and insufficient effectiveness of non-lethal measures. Indicators that should be considered include:

- Noted decline in the health of the local deer population, indicating that available food resources may be insufficient to sustain the population (e.g., poor body condition, signs of nutritional stress or elevated winter mortality as determined by the working group reviewing the data) or the prevalence of chronic wasting disease or other communicable disease.
- Noted increase in the number and concentration of deer in inappropriate or high-conflict areas, such as residential neighbourhoods and public parks, where deer are causing ongoing nuisance impacts (e.g., landscape damage, park degradation), and where non-lethal measures have been fully explored (including education/outreach and ticketing for deer feeding) and proven not effective in deterring this behaviour. In this situation, area specific / targeted cull should be approached as opposed to an overall community cull.
- Noted increase in deer-vehicle collisions and where non-lethal measures have been fully explored (including education/outreach, ticketing for speeding or deer feeding, and wildlife signage) and proven not effective in deterring this behaviour and preventing collisions, particularly where:
 - There is a sustained upward trend over time, and/or
 - Collisions are concentrated in identifiable high-risk locations, creating public safety concerns.

- Noted increase in reports of defensive deer behaviour and negative human–deer interactions and where non-lethal measures have been fully explored (including education/outreach and ticketing for deer feeding) and proven not effective in deterring this behaviour, including:

- Defensive or habituated deer
- Increased frequency of complaints from residents
- Encounters occurring in high-use public areas

The specific thresholds that constitute a “notable” change under each of the above conditions, and the level at which such changes are considered to have a measurable impact, will be established by the Working Group described in Section 7. In doing so, the Working Group will also evaluate the extent and effectiveness of non-lethal management measures already implemented, including prevention, education, and outreach initiatives related to the identified condition. Population reduction measures will only be considered after these factors have been reviewed and assessed.

In addition to the above, the decision to implement population reduction should also consider:

- Sustained trends over time, rather than isolated or short-term increases
- Spatial clustering of issues (hotspots) indicating localized overabundance
- Community tolerance levels, as demonstrated through complaints, engagement, or surveys
- Regional context, including potential movement of deer into the community from surrounding areas

Population reduction is not triggered by a single metric or threshold, but by a convergence of evidence demonstrating increasing conflicts, risks to public safety, and impacts on the community and environment, where other management approaches

have proven insufficient. A decision on a deer cull will be made by the working group established by this strategy, after considering all of the above conditions.

6.4.2 Population Reduction Methods

As part of this review, the Committee and staff looked at case studies and approaches from many communities considering many different approaches for population reduction, including the following:

- Sharp-shooting (DeNicola and Williams 2008)
- Controlled hunting (e.g. cross-bow hunting; Hygnstrom et al. 2011)
- Hazing
- Translocation (Beringer et al. 2002)
- Immunocontraception (Gionfriddo et al. 2011)
- Capture (clover trap) and bolt[SD4]

In the case where it has been determined that population reduction is warranted based on the above criteria, a capture (clover trap) and bolt approach through a contracted service is the preferred approach, given cost effectiveness and humaneness.

Local Indigenous governments, and snpink’tn specifically given its area of responsibility, will be given the first opportunity for these contracted services.

Immunocontraceptive vaccines require booster shots in subsequent years to improve effectiveness, resulting in high costs (Evans et al. 2016). This approach should be sought only if partnering with a university or research facility, wildlife veterinarian, and with substantial financial assistance.

Translocation of urban deer to wilderness areas results in significantly lower deer survival and increases the risk of disease transmission such as Chronic Wasting Disease (Wright et al. 2020).

6.4.2.1 Use of meat: All meat harvested as a result of a population reduction will first be offered to snpink'tn, so that any harvest, handling, and distribution can follow syilx and snpink'tn protocol should the community choose to exercise that role. Where snpink'tn does not wish to take up that role for a given cull, meat will be offered local food banks, then to the general population.

6.4.3 Process for a Population Reduction

The decision process for applying to the province for a cull will be made by City Council

City Council will consider a recommendation from the working group based upon the criteria above prior to making a decision on applying to the province for a cull permit.

Population reduction is authorized through a wildlife act permit, issued to the City by the Province, through the regional wildlife biologist / manager through the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

In the application the province will look for justification for the population reduction (reduce conflict, reduce collisions etc) will want to know the cull process and method and other methods used to avoid this step. The province expects a defensible plan.

The permit issued will typically outline the following criteria that must be followed:

- Maximum number of animals to be culled
- Method permitted to be used
- Geographic area
- Public safety considerations
- Reporting requirements

Before any application for a population reduction permit is submitted to the Province, the City will provide written notice to snpink'tn describing the evidence relied on and the proposed scope. This notice is a consultation step, not a public communications step, and is separate from the question of whether or when the City communicates with the general public about a cull.

6.4.3.1 Communication for population

reduction: This strategy does not envision public communications as part of the decision-making process for population reduction.

It is the expectation that the public engagement done in the adoption of this plan outlining the conditions of a cull. It is best practice to de-politicize the cull itself and not draw attention to the cull when all the conditions are met and the province has issued permits. However, the City will ensure that any reduction is done in a transparent manner aligned with the SPCA 7 principles for ethical wildlife control (Ethical wildlife control infographic).

The public engagement carried out in adopting this strategy establishes the general conditions under which a cull may occur, but it does not substitute for the specific notice to snpink'tn described above once an actual cull is contemplated. The City may choose a measured, low-profile approach to broader public communications about a specific cull once permits are issued, but that choice should not be read as removing or shortening the notice owed to snpink'tn.

Other considerations to be taken into consideration during the planning of a cull, are:

- The permission for the use of private property
- Responses to requests for public comment from the media
- Testing for disease (chronic wasting disease and others)

Implementation of a targeted deer cull in Penticton would require authorization from the Province of British Columbia under the Wildlife Act, and would be a step considered only after other steps are taken and are 'evidence based'

6.4.3.2 Ethical treatment of wildlife: Given that animal welfare and the humane treatment of deer is a priority in the City of Penticton, urban deer management will be guided by the international consensus principles for ethical wildlife control (Dubois et al., 2017).

6.4.3.3 Roles for a cull: The City would be responsible for identifying the need for population reduction, after which a Wildlife Act permit would be required to legally authorize the removal of deer. The permit would specify the number of animals, methods, locations, and reporting requirements.

The cull itself would be delivered via a fee for service with a contractor and any viable meat would be given first to local first nations, after confirmation that the animal is not carrying Chronic Wasting Disease (see below).

All operations must comply with provincial legislation and municipal bylaws, including restrictions on firearm use, and would typically be carried out by qualified contractors under strict safety and reporting protocols.

6.5 Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease that affects cervids, including mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose, and caribou. The disease is caused by abnormal proteins known as prions, which accumulate in the brain and nervous system, resulting in progressive neurological deterioration, weight loss, abnormal behaviour, and ultimately death. There is currently no cure, treatment, or vaccine for CWD.

Unlike viruses or bacteria, prions are extremely resilient and can persist in the environment for many years. Infected animals shed prions through saliva, urine, feces, and decomposing carcasses and tissues. These infectious agents can contaminate soils and vegetation, allowing the disease to spread both through direct animal-to-animal contact and indirect exposure to contaminated environments.

CWD is widely regarded as one of the most significant long-term threats to North American cervid populations. Although the disease has been established in neighbouring jurisdictions, including Alberta, Montana, and Idaho, British Columbia confirmed its first case in the Kootenay region in

January 2024. Since that time, the Province has significantly expanded surveillance, testing, and monitoring efforts to better understand and manage the disease's spread.

6.5.1 Intention to Participate in Provincial Testing and Monitoring CWD in Local Deer Populations

Consistent with this strategy's objective of maintaining a healthy urban deer population, the City will support provincial CWD surveillance efforts where appropriate. This may include facilitating public awareness, reporting suspected cases, and assisting with the collection and testing of deceased deer found within the community to support ongoing monitoring and early detection efforts.



7 STRATEGY ADMINISTRATION

7.1 Funding

Penticton should include a yearly budget line item to manage urban deer and to ensure the strategies outlined in this plan are followed.

This strategy recommends a \$10,000 budgetary line item in 2027 and 2028, with an increase in a year that a cull is planned for a potential population reduction program, this plan recommends \$30,000 for that year.

Grants should be sought where available for this work.

7.2 Oversight

Urban deer management is a cross departmental issue with City Hall reception, public works / parks, inter-governmental relations (IGR), communications and bylaw all having roles identified within the strategy. The overall oversight of the program will continue to be Development Services, due to the ecological planning function included within the division.

7.3 Working group

This strategy envisions a working group that will meet yearly and involve the Conservation Officer Service, provincial ministry staff, BC-SPCA, and a standing seat for snpink'tn (or its designate), and be hosted and led by the City. The working group will review the objectives of the plan and guide implementation.

The working group will act as an 'advisory' group, and make recommendations to the City, but will not have any decision making authority.

7.4 Regular reporting

This plan envisions reporting on deer inventory, call numbers, vehicle collisions and other data identified in this strategy. This reporting will be posted on the City's website on a yearly basis and shared with partners.

7.5 Advocacy

The City should continue to advocate for the province to take a more active role in the management of urban deer and lead population reduction in communities that have shown leadership and the development of urban deer management strategies and provide funding for municipalities that have urban deer management strategies in place in a manner consistent with the Province's own obligations under DRIPA.



Photo credit: David Bell

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URBAN DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

