



# Agenda

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**Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting**  
to be held via Zoom and in person in Room B – City Hall  
Wednesday, June 24, 2026  
at 9:30 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 May 27, 2026 Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting

Recommendation:

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

4. **New Business**

Laven 4.1 Draft Urban Deer Management Strategy for Committee 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**

**Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting**  
held via Zoom and in person in Council Chambers  
Wednesday, May 27, 2026  
at 9:30 a.m.

**Present:** Dan Chetner, Biologist, Chair  
Joni Reimer, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, Vice-Chair  
Sioban Darlington, BC Government Wildlife Sector (via Zoom)  
Andrea Wallace, BC SPCA (via Zoom)  
Jodi McKay, BC Wildlife Federation (via Zoom)  
Maryse Pellerin, Community Member

**Regrets:** Jason Reynen, Councillor  
Maryssa Bonneau, Penticton Indian Band  
Wilbert Borren, Community Member  
Jasmine Han, Community Member

**Council Liaison:** Ryan Graham, Councillor

**Staff:** Blake Laven, General Manager of Development Services  
Hayley Anderson, FOIPPA and Records Management Specialist  
Janet Glowa, Legislative Assistant

1. **Call to Order**

The Chair called the Urban Deer Advisory Committee to order at 9:31 a.m.

2. **Adoption of Agenda**

**It was MOVED and SECONDED**

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

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

3. **Adoption of Minutes**

3.1 Minutes of the January 21, 2026 Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting

**It was MOVED and SECONDED**

THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee adopt the minutes of the January 21, 2026 meeting as presented.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

3.2 Minutes of the February 25, 2026 Urban Deer Advisory Committee Meeting

**It was MOVED and SECONDED**

THAT the Urban Deer Advisory Committee adopt the minutes of the February 25, 2026 meeting as presented.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Councillor Graham joined the meeting at 9:36 am.

**4. New Business**

4.1 Work Plan Update

The General Manager of Development Services provided the Committee with the work plan for the remainder of the term.

4.2 Deer Count Plan and Community Communications

The General Manager of Development Services provided the Committee with an overview of the current status of the community communications strategy with more information to follow at the June 24, 2026 meeting.

4.3 Strategy Development Workshop

The General Manager of Development Services provided the Committee members with an opportunity to share their ideas and any strategy development.

**5. Next Meeting**

The next regular Urban Deer Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for June 24, 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 May 27, 2026 at 10:52 a.m.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Certified Correct:

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Janet Glowa  
Legislative Assistant



# Memo to Committee

penticton.ca

**Date:** June 24 2026  
**To:** Urban Deer Advisory Committee  
**From:** Blake Laven, General Manager of Development Services  
**Subject:** Draft Urban Deer Management Strategy for Committee Feedback

**File No:** RMS 0540-20

## Background

Following the workshop at the May 27, 2026 Urban Deer Advisory Committee meeting, staff have prepared a draft strategy for the Committee's review and feedback.

The strategy consolidates the Committee's work to date, incorporating discussions from previous meetings, input received from delegations, and best practices identified through a review of approaches taken in other communities.

The intent is for Committee feedback to be incorporated into a more formal draft plan, A graphic designer will subsequently refine the document to enhance its readability and usability, and to incorporate imagery and corporate branding.

The document will then be circulated to internal City departments for further review, comment and concurrence as is standard practice in the development of policy that impacts multiple departments. The document will be circulated to the Penticton Indian Band and other external agencies for their comment as well.

The revised document will then be presented to Council and released for public comment (targeting August), prior to formal adoption (targeting September).

## Analysis

Staff are not recommending any Council resolutions at this time, but welcome feedback on the draft strategy.

## Attachments

Attachment A: DRAFT City of Penticton Urban Deer Management Strategy

Respectfully submitted,

Blake Laven,  
General Manager of Development Services

# City of Penticton

## Urban Deer Management Strategy

### Table of contents:

1. Objectives
2. Background
3. Deer as a species
4. Framing the problem locally
5. Journey – Task Force and development of the strategy
6. Strategy
  - a. Data collection and monitoring
  - b. Communication and public engagement
  - c. Urban design – habitat manipulation
  - d. Population control triggers and methods
7. Strategy Administration

DRAFT

## 1. Objectives

The objective of this strategy is to manage the urban deer population in Penticton in a manner that enhances public safety, 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 stewardship principles.

## 2. Background

Penticton is located within Syilx territory, where snpink'tn culture carries responsibilities for tmix<sup>w</sup> (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 honoring and respecting snpink'tn culture.

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 less places to feed and exist, we are seeing more instances of conflict between deer and people and pets.

While generally docile, deer can exhibit defensive behavior 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 keep 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 spink'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:

- Mule deer: The most prevalent in the Okanagan. These deer have large ears (mule like), with a white rump patch and black tipped tail.
- White tailed deer: Expanding 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 focussed more on woody plants.

Deer are generalists with regard to their diet. They eat shrubs, leaves, fruit and ornamental plants and prefer to be in 'edge habitats' like urban wildlife interface areas. Deer learn quickly and will return to reliable food sources.

Does (female deer) live in matrilineal groups (family units) with strong site fidelity (don't travel much from their home area). They pass on their movement patterns to their fawns (baby deer).

Bucks (male deer) are more solitary with larger home ranges. Bucks compete for does and can have many mates. Bucks become very mobile during rut (mating season) as they compete for does. Bucks can breed multiple does, with more mature bucks dominating breeding.

With regard to reproduction and mating, the rut season is generally October to December for our region. Does generally breed after their first or second year of life and have a gestation period of ~200 days, with fawns born in May – June. 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.

A small number of bucks can maintain high reproduction rates. The implications for this is that removing does are 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. Deer in these settings benefit from abundant and reliable food sources (landscaping, irrigated vegetation), reduced predation, and the ability to maintain smaller home ranges.

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.

While ecological research provides some useful reference points, these are primarily derived from forested environments. 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. However, these thresholds do not translate directly to urban contexts, where deer can persist at much higher densities due to artificial food sources and the absence of limiting factors such as predation.

In urban deer management, the focus is therefore not on achieving a specific population density, but on 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.

Instead, best practice is to establish impact-based triggers to guide management decisions. These may include:

- Trends in deer–vehicle collisions
- Frequency and spatial concentration of public complaints
- Documented damage to landscaping, agriculture, and natural areas
- 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. This includes tracking:

- Deer–vehicle collision data
- Complaint volumes and locations
- Observed deer abundance (through surveys or counts)
- Indicators of ecological or landscape damage

Monitoring these indicators over time allows the municipality to identify trends, assess whether conditions are deteriorating, and determine when management actions may be required.

At present, the City of Penticton has not conducted a formal deer population estimate and the overall population size remains uncertain as part of this review process. The last recorded deer count conducted in Penticton was in done in 2012 and found 20 deer in the community in the Spring and 49 in the fall.

Current understanding is based largely on anecdotal observations, including perceptions that deer numbers are increasing or that the issue is worsening. Furthermore, the City does not keep statistics on deer complaints, damage and vehicle collisions. As part of this strategy, 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 on 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 aggressive 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 aggressive 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.

Deer impact 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 – Task Force and strategy development**

Given all of this background, Council has endorsed a Task Force to help develop this strategy. The Terms of reference for the Task Force, included a membership of biologists, government and non governmental members and members of the general public. Specifically within the terms of reference was an acknowledgment of indigenous perspectives on deer and included space for persons representing indigenous perspectives to participate and contribute.

The Task Force has met several times over 2025 and 2026. The Committee was educated on the indigenous perspective on deer and their place amongst us in this land.

From James Pepper, Natural Resources 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<sup>w</sup>, 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.”*

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

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 Task Force 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.

- ***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 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 key to be collected 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, aggressive deer, injured deer or miscellaneous
- Public perceptions: Include a question about deer on the citizen survey to monitor over time

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

- ***Communication and public education***

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 (ie fence heights)

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.

Targeted signage in areas with incidents of defensive deer. This will be the job of the City to erect this signage based on reports from the public.

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.

- ***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 in appropriate 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 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 plant species that deer have an aversion to and how to fortify their yard spaces from deer.

- **Population Control**

Population reduction should not be the main objective of urban deer management and should be seen as a last resort if other management steps have not been effective.

Before population reduction should be considered, accurate deer counts should be conducted for a minimum 3 year period to understand a baseline condition and trend.

Population reduction should only be considered in the following conditions:

*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, including:

- 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) 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 not been 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, 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, including:
  - Aggressive or habituated deer
  - Increased frequency of complaints from residents
  - Encounters occurring in high-use public areas

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.

### *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:

- Sharpshooting
- Cross bow hunting
- Hazing
- Relocation
- Immuno contraceptive
- Capture and bolt

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

Local indigenous groups will be given the first opportunity for these contracted services.

An immune contraceptive approach should be sought only if partnering with a university or research facility and with substantial financial assistance.

Use of meat: All meat harvested as a result of a population reduction will be offered to local indigenous food agencies as a first step and then local food banks and then the general population.

### *Process for a population reduction:*

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 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

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-politize the cull itself and not draw attention to the cull when all the conditions are met and the province has issued permits.

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)

In summary, 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 consider only after other steps are taken and are 'evidence based'.

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 meat would be given first to local first nations.

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.

## 7. Strategy Administration

**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 2029 for a potential population reduction program, this plan recommends \$30,000 for that year.

Grants should be sought where available for this work.

**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.

**Working group:** this strategy envisions a working group that will meet yearly and involve conservation office, provincial ministry staff and be hosted and led by the City. The working group will review the objectives of the plan and guide implementation.

**Regular reporting:** This plan envisions reporting on deer inventory, numbers of calls, 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.

**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.