

# DON'T FEED THE DEER

Although well intentioned, feeding deer can actually endanger their health and survival. There are many reasons why Manitoba Sustainable Development does not recommend feeding deer.

## HUMAN SAFETY AND PROPERTY DAMAGE

- Wild animals are dangerous. By feeding wild animals, you may be conditioning them to expect food from people. Deer that lose their natural tendency to avoid people can become a significant threat.
- Deer can attract predators such as coyotes and wolves. This would increase safety concerns and risk to people and pets.
- When deer are attracted to homes or farms, the risk for vehicle collisions increases. This can result in numerous deer fatalities, expensive vehicle repairs and human injury.
- Deer attracted to artificial or supplemental food sources will also feed on neighbours flowers, trees, shrubs or on farmers' hay bales.

## DEER HEALTH AND SAFETY

- A deer's digestive system changes slowly with the seasons. In winter, their system adapts to allow them to digest relatively low quality food like twigs, buds and stems.
- Rapid or dramatic changes to this winter diet can lead to bloating, diarrhea, enteritis and in some cases, death.
- Deer have starved to death with full stomachs in winter because they could not digest high carbohydrate foods like hay, grains, corn and alfalfa.
- Deer will travel long distances to reach an artificial food source. This may increase exposure to predators and other hazards (ex: increased risk of vehicle collision with more frequent highway crossings).

## OVERABUNDANCE

- Natural processes limit deer populations to a level where they live in balance with their habitat. Winter mortality is normal in Manitoba. This natural mortality varies from year to year, but helps ensure the deer population stays at, or below, what the habitat can support.
- Research shows that providing extra food can raise deer reproduction and survival rates. Deer populations can increase to levels too high for the habitat to sustain causing long-term damage to that habitat. This damage can affect the deer population, vegetation and a wide variety of other wildlife species that depend on the habitat for food, nesting or shelter.

## DISEASE TRANSMISSION

- Deer gathered at artificial food sources have a higher risk of transmitting diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, chronic wasting disease, brucellosis and parasites to one another.

Manitoba Sustainable Development can order people to stop feeding wildlife due to concerns about the health and safety of wildlife, the safety of people or to prevent property damage. Additional enforcement action, up to and including charges and possible fines, may occur if orders issued are not complied with.

**For more information, please contact:**

**Manitoba Sustainable Development**

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