

LONGER VIEW

NJ behind times on deer control

Regarding "Deer hunt possible in Saddle River" (NorthJersey.com, June 18):

In 2015, Saddle River residents invited the League of Humane Voters of New Jersey to advocate for the deer. On May 2, I attended the Urban Deer Fertility Control Workshop sponsored by the Botstiber Institute for Wildlife Fertility Control in Tarrytown, New York. Deer fertility control is catching fire all over the country with positive, effective results.

In Saddle River, the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife rejected nonlethal fertility control. This will hurt the town and surrounding communities, jeopardizing public safety, will lower property values and will not resolve conflicts involving deer. In fact, the science has shown that deer respond to hunting pressure with increased fertility. Fewer competitors for food and habitat stimulates breeding, causes earlier pregnancies, better neonatal health and larger litters. Nonlethal fertility control effectively sterilizes deer and reduces the population; deer eat less vegetation, but they remain as placeholders so new deer do not move into the territory.

Why is New Jersey behind the times? Researchers from Wyoming discovered a way to decrease the number of deer-related crashes. They found that covering wildlife warning reflectors/signs with white cloth bags led to a 65 percent drop in the number of deer carcasses along that road. They theorize the white

color may alert the deer, much in the way they alert each other by flipping their white tails in times of danger. It also helps to stay alert and drive slowly.

Deer are dependent on available habitat and food supply. Less food means fewer deer. Stronger laws against feeding, which is also called baiting, need to be enacted. Artificial feeding contributes to deforestation, increased fertility, over-browsing, deer-auto collisions and the spread of disease. Fencing, applying repellents and planting deer-resistant plants deter deer. Having fewer deer does not reduce the risk of contracting Lyme disease. All warm-blooded animals can be tick carriers, including the songbirds at the feeders in your backyard. Consider using tick tubes and visiting LymeDisease.org for helpful solutions.

Human encroachment into the deer's habitat and resulting issues are unfairly attributed to deer. It's easy to blame deer, but the truth is that forests are affected by many things.

As a society, people want nonlethal deer conflict management. In Saddle River, six out of 10 voters chose nonlethal deer management. Saddle River officials should rethink the strategy and respect voter rights before moving forward with its plan to kill deer.

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