

**"In heavily populated areas, deer should be managed a part of an overall health emergency, not protected as an endangered natural resource. The well-being of humans must come first."**

—Dr. John Rasweiler

## **An Exploding Health Crisis ... and the Way to Solve It**

The reduction of deer populations through a combination of recreational hunting (at times organized and guided by skilled experts), and humane professional harvesting is the best way for places like Southold to control its deer problem and subsequent health emergency, a conclusion drawn from a 2014 Cornell University deer-management study ([bit.ly/deerCornell](http://bit.ly/deerCornell)). A painless process of trapping or chemical immobilization of deer by darting, followed by euthanasia, are also options, but their most appropriate use is in populated areas where hunting is impossible.

**The following approaches—either impractical, unaffordable or undesirable—simply do not work for the North Fork:**

### **Yard Spraying**

While acaricides can reduce tick populations, they also harm bees, butterflies, and other beneficial organisms. Realistically, we cannot spray the entire North Fork, and it takes only brief exposure to an untreated area to pick up ticks.

### **Four-poster De-ticking Stations**

These devices reduce but do not eliminate ticks in their immediate vicinity. However, a reduction in the cases of tick-borne diseases in humans has not yet been demonstrated. Furthermore, four-posters are supposed to be deployed at a density of one station per 40–50 acres—impossible in the Town of Southold because of New York State restrictions that forbid deployment close to occupied buildings, playgrounds (unless fenced-in), or roads. Deployment on farms or in orchards would be incompatible with the new Federal Food Safety Modernization Act.

### **Fertility Control**

Two different approaches, surgical sterilization and the administration of a contraceptive vaccine, have been tried on the Cornell campus and Fire Island but failed to reduce deer to environmentally acceptable levels. These approaches are not only impractical but also unaffordable. It costs a minimum of \$500 to capture and vaccinate—more than \$1,000 to sterilize—each deer. With the vaccine, recapture is necessary after a year (again, at high cost) for booster shots, and more than 90% of the herd must be treated within a three-year period to significantly limit the birth of untreated young. Even if such fertility controls made sense, tick levels would remain intolerably high for years.

# 7 BIGGEST MYTHS ABOUT DEER

## **1. Ticks would still be a problem, even if there were no deer.**

**Not true.** Immature black-legged ticks feed on certain small mammals (e.g., white-footed mice), known as **reservoir hosts**, where the ticks become infected with the organism responsible for Lyme disease but cannot reach maturity. In contrast, deer serve as **reproductive hosts**, feeding many hundreds of ticks to adulthood after which they drop off to lay thousands of eggs—a multiplier effect that puts deer at the heart of our current epidemic.

## **2. The deer were here first.**

**No.** Historically deer and man have always co-existed. But as we continue to eliminate their natural predators while also providing an abundant supply of food, deer proliferate at the expense of our health, safety, and natural environment.

## **3. Deer hunting is inhumane.**

Professional deer management is far more humane than letting animals go blind from periocular tick infections or be killed (or maimed to die elsewhere) by vehicles.

## **4. The deer population can be managed by recreational hunters alone.**

Cornell studies show that about 66% of the deer population would have to be removed each year to reduce the herd to sustainable levels. At best, recreational hunters currently harvest less than 25% of the local herd each year.

## **5. Fertility control is the best option.**

New York State bars sterilization or contraception as a deer-management tool except in studies leading to new scientific knowledge—a high bar to cross. (See "An Exploding Health Crisis" to learn more.)

## **6. We'd have fewer accidents if everyone drove slower.**

Deer will jump into the paths of cars at any speed and without warning—especially dangerous at dusk and dawn—causing 25% of all road accidents in our town.

## **7. Nature will take care of the problem.**

... but **only** when new predators, diseases, or starvation take their toll ... or if man resumes his historical role as primary predator.

## **BE PART OF THE SOLUTION**

As much of the land in Southold Town is privately held, management by landowners is extremely important in reducing the local deer population. If you have a parcel that routinely hosts a number of deer and are interested in having an experienced hunter on your property, contact NFDA at [northforkdeer@gmail.com](mailto:northforkdeer@gmail.com).

## **How Safe Is Bow Hunting?**

In the past 15 years, there have been only two incidents involving bow hunting in New York State—one self-inflicted and the other between two hunters.

## **MISSION**

*North Fork Deer Alliance (NFDA) is dedicated to promoting the return of the local deer population to levels compatible with human health, the environment, and the economy.*

## **INSURED ... TRAINED ... SKILLED**

We can connect you with hunters who are local residents, as well as conservationists concerned with maintaining the balance of nature. All have valid New York State hunting licenses, been vetted by an independent hunting organization, and will be overseen by a hunting manager. They are insured and will work with the property owners to meet their schedules. All hunting takes place between October 1 and March 31. In addition NYS law provides substantial liability protection for landowners using licensed recreational hunters.

### **CONTACT US**

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