



TOWN OF AURORA

Aurora Municipal Center

575 Oakwood Avenue, East Aurora, NY 14052

www.townofaurorany.gov

Deer Management Program Frequently Asked Questions

How do you know there are too many deer in the Town of Aurora? We do not know exactly how many deer are in the Town of Aurora. Per the New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC), the evidence of overpopulation is represented by woodlands without undergrowth, increased number of deer related collisions, and frequency of deer sightings. The East Aurora Police Department reported that over the last nine years, car-deer collisions increased 35.5%; jumping from 197 in 2016 to 267 in 2025 with last year producing the highest number of incidents on record.

How does this program differ from the normal hunting season? As a pilot, this program will take place at the conclusion of the traditional hunting season and Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators (NWCOs) will be able to use bait to increase their harvest.

Can't we accomplish these same goals through traditional hunting? Traditional hunting has not been sufficient to keep white-tailed deer numbers in check. The NYSDEC reports there are fewer hunters and most hunting tags go unfilled every year. While many hunters prefer to harvest trophy bucks, reducing the doe population will have a true impact on herd size.

What caused this problem? We all did. Grey wolves were eliminated from New York State by the end of the 1800's. Bobcats, which here once prevalent, are now seen rarely and only in the Southern Tier. Milder winters have reduced deer mortality.

Will firearms be used in the Village of East Aurora? No. It is illegal to discharge a firearm in the Village of East Aurora, and this law will also apply to Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators participating in the bait and shoot program.

What is an Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator? An NWCO is a hunter who has completed [NYSDEC Hunter Education Program Courses and Certifications](#) and taken specialized NWCO training and examinations. They can only conduct nuisance work once they apply for and receive their NWCO license.

Are NWCs permitted to come onto private property without permission? No. All landowner rights still apply. No one will enter private property without permission. Landowners may contact the Town of Aurora if they want to make their property available for the program.

When will this program take place? If approved, it is expected to begin in January 2027 and run through February 2027. The dates could be extended.

What data are you using to determine that this program is needed? We are relying on the expertise of state agencies as well as Cornell University. For more information please visit:

- [Deer Overabundance and Impacts | NYSDEC](#)
- [Tick Risk Score by Region | New York State Department of Health](#)
- [Why We Manage Deer | Cornell Botanic Gardens](#)
- [Decision Support for Communities Managing Deer | Cornell University, The Nature Conservancy](#)

How does an overabundance of deer impact our ecosystem? White-tailed deer are an integral part of our natural environment. However, when deer populations become too high for the habitat to sustainably support, excessive browsing can cause significant and long-lasting changes to forests and other natural areas.

According to the NYSDEC, high deer densities can:

- **Reduce or eliminate the forest understory.** Deer browse heavily on shrubs, wildflowers, and other vegetation beneath mature trees. Loss of this understory reduces food, cover, and nesting habitat for birds and other wildlife.
- **Give invasive plants an advantage.** Heavy deer browsing can reduce native plants while leaving some invasive species less affected, allowing invasive plants to become more dominant.
- **Reduce plant and wildlife diversity.** As the variety of native plants declines, the habitat available to wildlife also changes, potentially reducing the abundance and diversity of species that depend on a healthy forest understory.
- **Prevent the next generation of trees from growing.** Deer preferentially browse many tree seedlings and saplings, preventing them from surviving and developing into mature trees. Over time, this interferes with natural forest regeneration.
- **Change the long-term structure of the forest.** When young trees continually fail to replace older trees as they die, forests gradually become more open and less diverse, with a different mix of plant species.
- **Affect streams and other water resources.** Healthy forests help filter water, stabilize soils, and provide shade that helps keep streams and other waterbodies cool. Changes in forest vegetation can therefore have consequences beyond the forest itself.

How do deer contribute to tick-borne illness? White-tailed deer do not transmit Lyme disease, but they are a key host for adult ticks and help disperse ticks across the landscape. Deer are also important hosts for ticks associated with **Alpha-Gal Syndrome (AGS)**. A tick bite can cause sensitization to Alpha-Gal, potentially resulting in a serious or life-threatening allergy to red meat. The Center for Disease Control estimates that as many as 450,000 Americans may have AGS, although the true number is unknown because the condition is often difficult to diagnose.

Will this program be safe? Hunting has proven to be a very safe activity with fewer than two incidents per 100,000 hunters, on average. Individuals selected for this program will be experienced hunters who have taken additional training provided by the NYSDEC. All hunting safety rules will be followed.

Can't we just use chemicals to control tick populations? Any chemicals we deploy to kill ticks may harm other wildlife and end up in our water and food supply.

What about employing contraception? Experts at the NYSDEC and Cornell University have reported that contraception programs are ineffective unless the herd is isolated, such as on an island or in a dense urban area.

Can the deer be tranquilized and relocated instead? The overpopulation of white-tailed deer is an ecological disaster. Relocation would have a negative environmental impact on any area to which they would be relocated. These includes protected areas such as Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, which has its own deer management program to prevent destruction of their valuable habitats.

Has this problem been caused by the homes being built recently in the village? This is not a matter of space. Deer population has increased exponentially due to lack of predators and mild winters. When food is scarce in sparsely populated areas, deer will migrate to anywhere they can find nourishment.

Is this an effort to protect ornamental plants? While some residents might appreciate reduced deer populations for this reason, this is not the intent of the program.

What will become of all the meat? The NYSDEC requires that all meat harvested via this program be donated to food banks. New York State pays deer processors, and the meat is donated to Feedmore of WNY. For reference, West Seneca generated 38,000 meals for those in need in the first 15 months of the program.

Will residents see the hunting? No. All hunting will take place away from houses and in areas with enough space to hunt safely.

How will we determine if this program has been successful? We will monitor all metrics available with the assistance of NYSDEC and other agencies. This will include the health of our woodlands, deer sightings in dense residential areas, and vehicle accidents involving white-tailed deer.