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**REPORT TO THE  
PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2011**

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**SUBJECT**    **DEER CONTROL**

**ISSUE**

Capital Regional District (CRD) municipalities and committees have requested staff to provide background on deer control measures.

**BACKGROUND**

There is an increase in the population of ungulates throughout the Region. This has resulted in a rise in the number of public complaints regarding ungulate damage to gardens, landscaping and urban forests. There appears to be an increase in ungulate vehicle collisions. With the increasing animal population there is a concern regarding the potential human and animal health impacts related to animal associated diseases, and human/ungulate conflicts.

The topic is of concern to many municipalities and control of deer populations was a topic of discussion at the last meeting of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. Several municipalities in the region have instituted discussions or taken specific actions. A forum was held recently on Mayne Island to discuss deer overpopulation on the Southern Gulf Islands and the cities of Victoria and Nanaimo recently amended their Animal Control Bylaw prohibiting the feeding of wildlife.

The issue is also of concern to the province. The BC Ministry of Environment released a report, Urban Ungulate Conflict analysis for BC (March 2010), which was prepared for the Wildlife Conflicts Coordinator of the Conservation Officer Service of the Ministry of Environment by Gayle Hesse of the British Columbia Conservation Foundation. The 243 page report is available on the internet at:

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/info/wildlife\\_human\\_interaction/UrbanUngulatesConflictAnalysisFINALJuly5-2010.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/cos/info/wildlife_human_interaction/UrbanUngulatesConflictAnalysisFINALJuly5-2010.pdf).

The report notes that solving ungulate conflicts will likely include: changing stakeholder attitudes or behaviours; developing community capacity to increase participation in management decisions; establishing measureable management objectives for each community; modifying deer behaviour; modifying human behaviour; reducing herd size; and amending provincial and municipal regulations to facilitate management interventions. It points out that no single technique will be universally appropriate and that complexities of deer management and limitations on available interventions make quick-fix solutions unlikely. Further, it notes that because both the positive and negative values associated with ungulates are so high, setting management goals and determining treatment options can be very difficult.

The report suggests that management options fall into four categories: conflict reduction, population reduction, fertility control, and administrative options. Where it is determined that the problems and impacts are severe the report indicates that most researchers suggest populations be lowered using lethal control, and then, when proven practical, population levels can be maintained using fertility control. However multiple jurisdictions currently have various degrees of responsibility for implementing this type of management decision. Provincial and community resources together with property owner cooperation are needed to achieve

measurable results. Therefore the report suggests that a comprehensive management plan with a variety of administrative options, such as amending municipal bylaws and provincial regulations to permit lethal control options, needs to be implemented. Public education and formal project monitoring need to be ongoing before, during and after any management interventions.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Receive the report and direct staff to write and meet with the Ministry of Environment to request that the province proceed with an ungulate management plan for the CRD in consultation with the appropriate agencies and interests.
2. Direct staff to work with the province and community stakeholders to prepare the scope and terms of reference for an Ungulate Management Plan including a public consultation framework and funding options.
3. Direct staff to examine the CRD Animal Control Bylaw to determine if any amendments can be made that would help control deer populations and consult with municipalities on a potential 'regional model bylaw'.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

Prior to undertaking any animal control action the Hesse report notes that management goals and measureable responses need to be established prior to the project implementation so that outcomes can be evaluated objectively. In order to monitor a project outcome, baseline data is needed as well as project monitoring during and after management options are implemented. Population data, standardized reporting of complaints and vehicle collisions, documentation (age, sex, health) of any animal removed, and vegetative browse damage assessments in open areas and enclosed plots can all help to determine the effects of management actions and evaluate effectiveness.

### **Potential Control Measures**

The potential control measures identified in the Hesse report include conflict reduction, population reduction, fertility control, and administrative options have varying impacts on the animal problem, implementation costs and support from the public. The report suggests that the status quo option of taking no action at this time will result in the increased growth of the ungulate population to the potential capacity that the habitat can support. The implied result is that without the implementation of widespread conflict reduction measures, an ongoing increase in complaints and damage to the point that actions to manage the population will ultimately be required.

Conflict reduction techniques are intended to keep animals away from properties, or minimize damage if they do enter property and reduce human/animal conflicts. Except for fencing the other techniques such as landscape design using appropriate plant selection, repellents and scaring devices can reduce but not eliminate damage. Many of these options could be addressed through changes to the CRD and municipal animal control bylaws and are often supported by the public.

Population reduction programs involve the initial reduction of animals and an ongoing maintenance of population level. The techniques used are capture and relocate, capture and euthanize, controlled public hunting, sharpshooting and natural predator reintroduction. There

is concern about the impact of capture and release on the animal mortality, and hunting in urban areas is both a safety and social issue. The lethal control measures require changes to provincial, CRD and municipal bylaws regarding the use of lethal measures in urban municipalities. These measures are not widely supported by the public.

Fertility control measures are limited as the drugs and vaccines are not readily available and are still in the research stage. Researchers suggest that this technique can be used to maintain a reduced population level. This option requires more scientific research and testing prior to being implemented in the region.

Administrative options can be undertaken by municipalities and the province. The Hesse report indicates that municipalities can implement bylaws that complement and enhance more active ungulate population interventions. Bylaws can limit the type or amount of certain landscaping plants, restrict the feeding or sheltering of ungulates within municipal limits, regulate land-use to provide wildlife corridors, green space considerations and riparian zone protection in future development applications and regulate the discharge of weapons and hunting. The report also identifies public education as another administrative technique which provides information about the management process (ongoing activities, timing, funding, who is involved) and information about the animal control issue.

### **Animal Control Management Plan**

Should the CRD want to pursue animal control measures consideration should be given to the preparation of a management plan to determine the extent of the animal problem, identify trends in animal populations and issues, identify the range of the control measures supported by the region's residents, and the financial implications of implementing the plan. Such a plan would require an extensive public consultation plan as the need for full public consideration of the issue and potential options will be required.

### **Social Implications:**

Many of the management options involve changing animal and human behavior through landscaping design or animal feeding restrictions while less effective may be supported by the public. However, the most effective management techniques that require lethal control measures will likely not be perceived favourably by large segments of residents.

### **Environmental Impacts:**

The continued increase in the deer population in the region may result in increased damage to gardens, landscaping and urban forests, ungulate vehicle collisions, potential human and animal health impacts related to animal associated diseases, and human/ungulate conflicts. The number of public complaints regarding damage will inevitably increase as well. However, actions to reduce the populations through lethal control measures may cause noise or safety issues.

### **Intergovernmental Implications:**

This issue affects all municipalities and electoral areas as the wildlife populations and range are not exclusive to any one jurisdiction. The Hesse report notes that an integrated management program will require action by the province, municipalities, and the general public.

### **Financial Implications**

Maintaining the “status quo” or do nothing option will result in increased local and provincial government costs related to responding to increased complaints, public and private costs related to increased property and vehicle damage and perhaps human injury or fatalities. There will be administrative costs to implement any control measures and depending upon their success the complaints and damage may continue to increase. There are costs to undertake research into the problem including a community survey and costs to prepare and implement a management plan. It can be expected that a comprehensive plan could cost in the range of \$100,000 to \$150,000. A completed terms of reference will assist in providing a clear indication of costs.

### **CONCLUSION**

If the CRD wants to reduce the damage and conflict issues and complaints associated with the increasing ungulate population then management options need to be considered and implemented. From the research it appears that to significantly reduce the damage and conflicts a reduction in the animal population is required. Once the population numbers are lowered, then damage is easier to manage with conflict reduction techniques. However, population reduction methods are generally not popular with the majority of the public.

There is no one measure that can address this issue, however, a limited reduction in the property and environmental damage and human/vehicle/animal conflicts can be achieved through changes to animal control bylaws, land use regulations and public education. This is already being implemented within some local municipalities. At a minimum staff can review the existing bylaws to identify potential opportunities for animal management options to be considered. If more substantive action is supported by the Board, staff can prepare terms of reference for an integrated animal control management plan including a public consultation framework.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Board:

1. That staff be directed to work with the province and community stakeholders to prepare the scope and terms of reference for an Ungulate Management Plan including a public consultation framework and funding options.



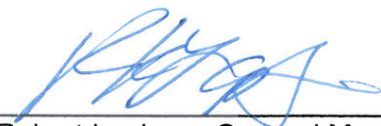
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CRD Bylaw and Animal Care Services



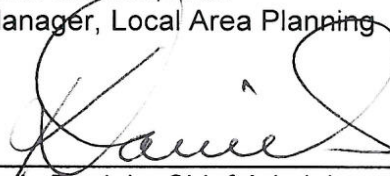
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June Klassen, MCIP  
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Robert Lapham, General Manager  
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Kelly Daniels, Chief Administrative Officer  
Concurrence