Town of Yarmouth

DEER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY
Terms of Reference

April 14, 2022

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Overview

Town of Yarmouth Council has been dealing with an over population of deer since 2014.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Terms of Reference is to develop a DMS that will guide the control of the deer population in areas of conflict in the Town of Yarmouth. Ultimately, the program will be designed to bring the urban deer population to a level consistent with the social carrying capacity of Town residents.

The social carrying capacity is defined as a level at which the local human population can tolerate or accept the problems associated with a deer herd. This capacity may vary depending upon the area of Town.

The objectives of this process are to:

a. Prepare a DMS that will address:
    i. Deer encroachment on private urban properties resulting in vegetation loss and increased exposure to risk of deer aggression.
    ii. Public health and safety concerns related to deer-auto collisions and risk of aggressive deer-human or deer-pet interaction or transmission of disease.
b. Engage citizens, government/private/non-profit experts, and First Nations in preparing an action-oriented DMS
c. Gain public and local/provincial support for the implementation of the resulting strategy

A four-step process is proposed to develop the DMS. A proposed timeline with the project tasks is attached at Appendix B.

Step 1: Establish Resources Working Group and Propose Management Options

Resources Working Group (RWG)

The proposed RWG will be a body of individuals who have technical expertise and real-life experience to contribute to the DMS. This group will provide technical and scientific expertise to assist both Town staff and the community. Individual members will act as a liaison with their organizations and provide knowledge and expertise to support the work of the working group. Members of the working group will represent the following interests:

- Provincial Department of Lands and Forestry

- Independent biologist
- Concerned community members
- Municipal staff and Council
- First Nations
- Nova Scotia Federation of Anglers and Hunters
- Women That Hunt

The RWG will be established based on the members in Appendix A. These people have demonstrated technical and experience with deer-human conflicts and have expressed an interest in assisting with the DMS. As part of Step 1, staff will contact each of them and confirm their willingness to serve as working groups members. Individuals may be added to the working group should a knowledge gap be identified during the process.

The RWG is expected to consider the following:

- Factors contributing to the over abundant population
- Population estimates
- Population, annual rate of increase, and projected growth with and without intervention
- Documentation of property damage, as well as human health and safety concerns
- Legal ramifications or jurisdictional issue – Town bylaws, Provincial and Federal laws
- Identified or suspected ecological, economic, sociological, and political consequences
- Efficacy of management options and geographic project scope for implementation
- Development of management option evaluation matrix
- Contents of communication materials and surveys

RWG Process

The RWG will be responsible for guiding the development of the DMS. It will work within the scope of the communications and consultation set out in the approved framework and working where necessary with community partners. The RWG will prepare and recommend the management strategy and action plan to meet the objectives set out above and that address the deer-human conflicts in the Town. The finalized strategy will be approved by Yarmouth Town Council.

Several members of the public have indicated interest in being part of the RWG and helping to develop the DMS. Contact will be made with these individuals along with other recommendations from the current members of the RWG. The intent is to include members from the community that represent all sides of the issue to allow for a balanced approach, where possible. Special regard will be given to those most effected by deer as well as those implicated in suggested management options.

Town of Yarmouth communications staff will provide administrative and communications support, including the compilation and distribution of information and meeting material. They will make meeting arrangements, and oversee communications, consultation and reporting to Council.

Working within the Terms of Reference, the RWG may consult on the draft DMS through a Deer online campaign and make final recommendations on the strategy and actions to Council.

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Management Options

As part of Step 1, RWG members will be briefed on management options to be considered for the DMS. These options have been reviewed by Council, Town staff, and NS Lands and Forestry staff as well as circulated on the Town's website.

Several short and long-term strategies will be required to address current and immediate conflict issues and long-term population levels. Each of these strategies requires inter-governmental cooperation to achieve desired results. The emphasis will be on managing expectations by balancing management strategies that reduce the conflict problem.

Based on initial consultation, management options can be categorized into four areas:

- Conflict reduction
- Population reduction
- Fertility control; and
- Administrative options

Conflict reduction focuses on keeping animals away from susceptible properties, and minimizing damage and conflicts using methods such as landscaping, repellants, and fencing.

Population reduction programs are ongoing with the initial reduction phase followed by a maintenance phase after localized population densities are reduced**.** This program will require specific management decisions to develop the required control details.

Fertility control options are very limited due to the lack of approved fertility control drugs for ungulates in Canada. Because of the limited access to these types of drugs, this option is not considered viable at this time.

Administrative options include Municipal bylaws or Provincial regulations to permit lethal control options and other measures. These are not actually management strategies in and of themselves but outline how the other measures would be implemented and the results monitored. A more appropriate fourth category would be "status quo" or learning to live with deer, perhaps through such measures as public education.

The RWG will consider the following management options under for the proposed strategy:

Conflict reduction:

- Hazing and frightening techniques
- Repellents
- Landscaping alternatives
- Fencing
- Deer vehicle collision mitigation

Population reduction

- Capture and relocate
- Capture and euthanize

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- Managed urban hunt

Fertility control

- **Currently not a viable option**

Admin/Status Quo

- Bylaw review and enforcement
- Public education and accountability

Step 2: DMS Preparation and Communication Strategy

DMS Preparation will Involve:

- Agreement of goals and objectives for the strategy
- Confirming an understanding of the management options and measures under consideration
- Identifying whether additional management options or measures should be considered
- Identifying implementation requirements for each management option under consideration
- Identifying and addressing data/information gaps
- Scoping geographic areas where measures are most warranted
- Developing evaluation criteria and designing an evaluation matrix
- Agreeing on the format and content of the DMS

In considering the management options and measures, evaluation criteria would be developed, including but not limited to:

- Public acceptability
- Efficacy in addressing documented deer-human conflict
- Short and long-term implications
- Geographic scope for applying various measures
- Implementation considerations such as amending bylaws, Provincial statutes or regulations, licensing, monitoring, and education
- Duration of recommended actions
- Cost

Town staff will prepare a draft DMS.

Communications Strategy

Early and ongoing communications and consultation regarding the DMS will consist of:

- A more robust online campaign through the Town's website and various social media platforms. Dedicated messaging through email or Alert TC to communicate progress and input by:
    - providing opportunities for the exchange of information by building awareness and understanding of what issues exist in the deer population and options for inclusion in the DMS;
    - creating an online forum, established through a discussion board on the Town's

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Engagement Hub, that will provide residents with the key messaging and engagement questions regarding the evolving DMS for discussion and input. The discussion board will be moderated by Town communications staff.

- Dedicated correspondence and sharing of key messages and engagement questions regarding the DMS with Provincial government officials, Town Councillors, and senior staff to allow them to monitor the process and provide input.

The online campaign could have several benefits:

- Moderate flow to allow for ongoing public discussion;
- Available through the Town's website;
- Users can be anonymous;
- Introduces subsequent stages of the consultation process;
- Provides opportunities for the participants to have questions answered;
- Solicits feedback;
- Structured so that feedback is constructive, and solution focused.

The online campaign will be initiated upon the approval of the Terms of Reference by Yarmouth Town Council and supported through traditional media and digital opportunities over the duration of the process. Input/feedback via online campaign will be by Town staff in consultation with the RWG.

Step 3: Finalize Deer Management Strategy

Based on the overall input from the consultations in Step 2, as well as professional and experiential judgment of the RWG and Council's direction, staff will finalize the DMS and prepare a final report for Council to review and consider.

Council may choose to conduct an additional survey to make a final determination of public opinion on the recommended management options and measures. The survey could be posted online using a similar process to the 2017 survey, conducted by the Planning and Development Department during the initial public engagement sessions.

Step 4: Implementation

Implementation is dependent on the approved recommendations of the DMS. No Town, community, or Provincial resources are currently committed to the implementation phase.

Project Management and Support Resources

This project will be managed by the Town of Yarmouth. A project manager will be appointed as part of the implementation process. Communications and Town staff support will be coordinated by the Town CAO, Mike Dolter, until a project manager is appointed. Town staff will include administrative support, project coordination services, as well as support for the online and media campaign, and the public survey (Council's discretion).

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Budget and Sources of Funding

There is currently no funding dedicated to assist with the development of the DMS. In-kind support will be sought from the groups and agencies listed in Appendix A. They will be asked to contribute their expertise and guidance as part of the RWG. Town staff will provide the administrative and communications support as required to ensure the project is completed within the established timeframe.

The Town will also designate a project manager for the duration of the project to ensure that the process is completed according to the approved Terms of Reference. Senior managers and the CAO from the Town will also contribute time and guidance to the process. Funding will be required for some activities, initiatives, and promotion. An initial budget of $10,000 will be established for this purpose which will also include funding for the annual pellet count survey.

Timeline

The DMS will be completed between March and June 2021, with implementation anticipated in Fall 2021 pending the approval of Yarmouth Town Council. Appendix B contains the activities and an estimated detailed timeline.

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APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

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