

## **A Proposal for Testing the Effectiveness of Two Methods of Deer Population Reduction in Urban Areas**

The Blandair Foundation proposes that Blandair Farm is an ideal location to compare the effectiveness of two methods of deer population reduction during the upcoming hunting season: bow hunting and rifle hunting with quiet ammunition.

The Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks has already planned deer bow hunts for Blandair Farm, probably because bow hunting is quiet and a very popular recreational activity. However, such use of bow hunting of deer has three well-recognized problems:

- 1) It is potentially ineffective in reducing a deer population of the density found on Blandair Farm. Recent experience at the nearby Patapsco State Park is an example.
- 2) It is inhumane, because almost all deer that die as a result of being hit with an arrow bleed to death, often moving long distances from where they were hit, hopefully leaving blood trails to follow in order to locate the dead deer. For this reason in Germany bow hunting of deer is not permitted.
- 3) It poses an unnecessary risk of creating bad public relations. It could stimulate public opposition to the control program not only from influential “humane” groups, but also from neighboring property owners as they encounter the odor from decaying deer corpses lying in thick cover nearby and deer dying on or leaving blood trails across their property. It has the high potential for increasing the negative attitude of the general public about hunting and hunters.

In contrast, the use of scope-mounted 22 caliber rifles to kill deer at close range with brain shots could be vastly superior to bow hunting in effectiveness since it would produce immediate death. The new quiet 22 caliber ammunition (for example, Remington™ Subsonic) is even more quiet than standard rimfire ammunition, which makes it a good subject for testing in urban areas, like Blandair Farm. With the ambient noise of traffic, aircraft, etc. near Blandair Farm, it is very doubtful that nearby residents would notice this gunfire. Conservation agencies at all levels of government should welcome opportunities to make effective deer population reduction as inoffensive as possible to neighboring residents.

Both methods of deer population reduction require hunters who are experienced and carefully screened. The county government has procedures in place to screen prospective bow hunters, and the Blandair Foundation (while welcoming the participation of the Howard County Government) can provide personnel to screen and supervise "Subsonic" shooters. While the county government plans to use 20 bow hunters per day on Blandair, we expect to use a smaller number of rifle hunters, say five or six, per day. In both cases, hunters will be permitted to shoot only at deer that are within 30 yards of the hunter. In addition, hunters will use stands so shots will hit the ground near the stands, or from

positions with very safe backstops. "Subsonic" hunters will be required to shoot deer through the brain to assure instantaneous death. Bag limits for "Subsonic" hunters will be the same as for bow hunters so that hunting effectiveness can be compared.

We propose that initially the following dates be considered for the use of rifles: October 22 and 23, November 13 and 26, and December 5 and 12. Bow hunting will not be scheduled for those dates; however the dates follow scheduled bow hunting dates. Before additional dates are scheduled for rifle hunting, a comparison of the effectiveness of the two methods should be made using the data from those five periods (with October 22 and 23 counting as one period) and from the first five periods of bow hunting. To further evaluate the two methods of deer removal, plans have been made to have dogs experienced at finding dead deer search the area after the first hunting period for each form of harvest.

Representatives from the Blandair Foundation's Division of Wildlife Research and Land Management can take the responsibility for obtaining appropriate authorizations to use 22 caliber rifles to kill deer as outlined above. For information, contact Dr. Aelred Geis, currently at 410-531-5300, ext. 2461.

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