

**Rapid City  
Deer Herd Management  
Program Summary**

**1996 - 2011**

September 2011

## **Introduction and Background.**

In 1994, the Urban Deer Citizens Advisory Task Force published its Deer Herd Management Plan that included several alternatives to deal with the problem of urban deer. The pros and cons of each method were outlined by the Task Force and after deliberate consideration, the Task Force issued its recommendation.

The 1994 Task Force recommendation was to allow the use of sharpshooters within the city to bait at selected open sites and use sharpshooters to shoot deer. Implementation required the City Council to pass an ordinance creating an exception to the prohibition against discharge of firearms within the city. The ordinance that would have permitted an exception failed by vote of the city council. No deer herd management program was implemented in 1994.

In 1995, a new deer committee was formed. Also, in 1995 a ballot measure was presented to the citizens of Rapid City to authorize the City Council to implement a Deer Herd Management Program in cooperation with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The ballot measure which was approved by a vote of 6,567 to 3,658 read as follows: be it ordained by the City of Rapid City that any other ordinance notwithstanding, the City of Rapid City is authorized to cooperate and to enter into agreements with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks to establish and maintain a deer herd management program for the deer population within the boundaries of the City of Rapid City, including but not limited to permitting persons authorized by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks to shoot, trap, or transport deer in order to implement and carry out an effective deer management program within the City of Rapid City. This ballot measure eliminated the need to pass an amendment to the Rapid City Municipal Code creating an exception to the prohibition against discharge of firearms within the city. The recommendation of the 1995 Deer Committee was to bait and trap and then transport trapped animals to a processing plant with processed meat donated to approved charitable organizations. The 1995 program was halted by a citizen lawsuit that ultimately resulted in dismissal on summary judgment motion filed by counsel for the city. The legislation at the heart of that litigation was amended in the 1996 South Dakota legislature to more clearly define the authority of the Secretary of Game, Fish and Parks to implement similar management programs.

Finally in December of 1996 the program began. A number of sites were selected around the west part of Rapid City and a contingent of sharpshooters was selected on the basis of proficiency. Program results are as follows:

## Program Summary

Season	Expenses	Pounds Meat	Number of Deer Harvested	Number of Carcasses given away
1996-97	23,272.82	6088	192	
1997-98	21,825.39	7339	162	
1998-99	25,242.88	10,231	207	
99-2000	12,383.86	3978	100	
2000-01	12,952.08	2994	111	
2001-02	12,255.32	2893	106	
2002-03	0	0	0	0
2003-04	0	0	0	0
2004-05	21,554.63	0	200	199
2005-06	30,753.03	0	301	300
2006-07	31,093.39	0	300	299
2007-08	30,962.86	0	300	300
2008-09	33,605.41	0	300	300
2009-10	33,437.53	0	300	300
2010-11	33,707.49	0	300	298
<b>Totals</b>	\$323,046.69	33,523	2,879	1,996

### **Deer Herd Management / Maintenance Plan.**

#### **A. Goal**

To maintain the Rapid City Urban Deer Herd at a manageable level. Preference will be given in the current program year to reducing the number of females due to their reproductive capacity. Emphasis will be on maintenance of the urban deer herd based on; 1) number of complaints from specific areas, 2) the City's ability to effectively harvest within each of these areas; and 3) the results of this year's deer population survey.

#### **B. Timing**

The operations under this current year plan will be conducted between December 1 and March 15. Operations under this plan may be conducted during any hour of the day however; preference will be given to hours between dusk to dawn.

#### **C. Implementation**

Having reviewed the results of the previous seasons Deer Management Program, the Parks Division recommends the following program implementing the following methods:

## **I. Baiting and Shooting.**

This method will involve pre-selection of bait sites on land where geography and topography maximize safety. Bait will be used to draw deer within the shooting area. Factors to be considered in selection of bait sites include examining the impact area, firing point, and firing procedure.

The impact area, *i.e.*, the area where the projectile may come to rest, must not contain domestic livestock, any building, structure or other personal property; should not contain any rocks, concrete, steel, water or other material that may permit a bullet to escape; should not contain any areas that are screened or covered or invisible to the sharpshooter and should be lower than the firing point to ensure no bullet may escape.

The firing point will be elevated sufficiently from the impact area to ensure bullets cannot escape the impact area; several firing points may be established on one site to take advantage of a particular terrain features, concentrations of animals at a site, and weather and wind conditions. All sharpshooters must have a clear and unobstructed view of both the impact area and adjacent land. All persons present at any firing point will be employed as sharpshooters.

The maximum distance between the impact area and the firing point must be no more than 100 yards to ensure accuracy, with the primary target to be in the brain at the base of the skull. Land within the corporate limits of the city will have preference.

## **II. Confine and shooting.**

This method will employ the same sharpshooters who are employees of the Parks Division and will involve pre-selection of suitable sites. Factors to be considered in selection of confinement sites include examine the access points, distance from houses and residential areas, topography, and property owner cooperation. Private property will only be used with owner's permission and that they approve of the technique and the timeframe of this management method. Confinement areas must be such that they are reasonably located away from pedestrian and vehicular traffic. All safety requirements for proficiency that applied to the sharpshooters under the 1997-1998 plan will apply to the sharpshooters under all subsequent plans.

The confine and shoot method will incorporate confinement structures provided to the City of Rapid City by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. These structures are used on a regular basis by game biologists when conducting big game studies and research. Bait will be utilized to draw the deer into these structures. Once the deer is confined in the structure the sharpshooter will either shoot the deer with a small caliber handgun or

rifle (22 caliber). Shot placement and technique will be pre-determined by mutual agreement between the sharpshooters and the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. In each case the technique or method will be chosen in such a way that would provide minimal disturbance to the deer.

**Requirements:**

Both approved methods will employ sharpshooters who are employees of the Parks Division of the City of Rapid City. All potential sharpshooters will be tested for firearm proficiency in cooperation with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. The sharpshooters will have completed firearms safety course, consent to a background investigation check, and pass a proficiency test. The proficiency test will include a minimum 3” shot group at 100 yards from a bench rest. The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks will provide training in the most humane and effective method of shot placement.

Telescopic or dim light sights will be used. Sharpshooters may be required to use an elevated shooting location or artificial lights for illumination of the bait site. Individual site topography may provide natural shooting elevation sufficient to eliminate the need for artificial shooting elevation.

The City of Rapid City will provide bait to be used at the preselected sites, and vehicles owned by the City of Rapid City will be provided for use by sharpshooters during the program. Sharpshooters may be permitted to use personal vehicles, subject to prior approval, upon proof of automobile liability coverage. Minimum acceptable liability policy limits to be maintained by the sharpshooter are: \$100,000/\$300,000 for bodily injury; \$50,000 for property damage, or a \$300,000 Combined Single Limit. Proof establishing sufficient coverage shall be provided to the City prior to use of private vehicle.

Sharpshooters will be compensated, as Council shall determine.

Sharpshooters will be provided a list of pre-selected bait sites on a weekly basis. Sharpshooters will be informed by the Superintendent of Parks, or his designee, where and when they may conduct activities. Selection of bait sites and confinement sites will be coordinated between any affected private property owner, the City of Rapid City and South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Rapid City Police Department Dispatch will be notified of shooting locations prior to any activities taking place.

This program will require approval and authorization by the Secretary of Game, Fish and Parks Department prior to implementation. The Secretary will require details of the method(s) to be employed, including, but not limited to; the types of firearms to be used, the location of the planned activities, the names of those city parks employees who will participate, the processing plant(s) and charitable organization(s), and the number and gender of animals to be harvested.

Prior to 2004-2005 Season, Sharpshooters delivered to an approved processing plant all animals harvested under this program by the City of Rapid City. Depending on weather conditions and the recommendation of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, harvested animals were field dressed prior to delivery to the processing plant to preserve the meat. The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks provided instructions in the proper method of field dressing. After field dressing, the entrails were disposed of at the Rapid City landfill.

Processing plants completed an application and bid form prior to being allowed to participate in this program. All suitable meat processed under this program was made available for donation to charitable organizations approved by the City of Rapid City.

Processing plant(s) maintained accurate records of all processing activities conducted under this program and submitted weekly reports to the Superintendent of Parks to include: total number of animals delivered, name of sharpshooter delivering deer, gender, total weight processed, and total pounds suitable for donation will be made available to approved charitable organizations. The Superintendent of Parks forwarded all reported information to the Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

In 2004 it was decided as a cost savings effort to distribute the carcasses to the general public on a first come first served basis. This change in the program was viewed as a cost saving effort which saved the City approximately \$40.00 per deer harvested in processing costs. Also it was determined at this time that the Game, Fish and Parks Department would also test the harvested deer for indications of Chronic Wasting Disease.

Also in 2004 the City appointed a Deer Task Force to consider other management methods in addition to the harvesting method. The task force contacted and met with various experts and considered the advantages and disadvantages of various non-lethal methods of management, including contraception, traffic safety warnings at deer crossings, trap and relocation as well as issuing hunting licenses for urban hunting. Although no definitive report was brought forward the task force believes that deer herd management needs to continue and that there should be a more in depth census of the deer herd as well as a study of migration patterns. It is hoped that the council, during the budget process, would look favorably on additional funding to support this research. Their report was submitted to the City Council at their December 4, 2006 Council meeting.

### Deer Management Program History

