Why Deer Stewardship?

Let's Find Balance for our Forests, Farms and Families

Deer New Jersey, strives to catalyze a community of partners—including landowners, municipalities, gardeners, farmers, non-profits, hunters, animal welfare advocates and many others—to **measurably benefit forests and human communities by reducing deer herd density to ecologically sustainable levels in areas that are out-of-balance**.

We are taking a mutual-gains approach to this project and hope to work with all people who wish to see ethical and responsible deer herd stewardship.

Join us!

Specific and lasting benefits can include ***protecting*** native forests and plant and animal diversity, ***reducing*** high levels of deer-vehicle collisions, ***defending*** local farms and food production from excessive herd damage, ***mitigating*** the threat of tick-borne illnesses, ***providing*** high quality affordable food to New Jersey families facing food insecurity, and ***supporting*** the health of deer herds themselves.

Why Deer Stewardship

Current deer herd densities vary widely by region in New Jersey, but many parts of the state host herds far greater in size than our natural landscapes coevolved with. In some places, deer have been counted at 100 per square mile, upwards of 10 times the density that is considered sustainable for ecological health and biodiversity. A few locations have measured 200 per square mile.



White-tailed deer are native to New Jersey and belong in our landscapes. They are a vital part of our natural heritage and deserve respect and humane treatment. But severe overpopulation has devastating impacts, including:

Ecosystem degradation — Dense deer herds feed heavily on young plants, limiting or even stopping native tree regeneration, decimating native plant communities, and aiding the spread of invasive plant species. As native plant diversity and abundance collapse, so do the diversity and abundance of wildlife that depend on those plants, from pollinators to birds and beyond.



Agricultural losses — In a major survey, 25% of New Jersey farmers reported abandoning parcels of farmland due to deer damage. Others report limiting the types of crops grown, reducing the supply of locally produced food. Lower herd density in key locations alleviates strains on farmers and local food supply.

Residential property costs — It is estimated that homeowners in high deer density areas can lose $200 to $800 annually due to garden and landscaping damage caused by deer.

Vehicle collisions — There are 25,000 deer-vehicle collisions annually in New Jersey according to insurance claims alone. Unreported deer strikes are estimated to double that number. Collisions typically decline when deer numbers are reduced.



Tick-related Illnesses — Deer transport and nourish numerous tick species and are a vector for tick-born illnesses. Some studies show that fewer deer lead to less tick-borne illnesses in people.

Impact on deer health — Lower herd density can leads to healthier deer herds, with less competition for nutritious food, leading to lower stress and higher resistance to disease.

Natural systems are complex, and deer abundance is certainly not the only factor impacting our lands. Consider walking your property with professionals such as foresters and ecologists to gain added perspective.

Why Are Deer Populations So Out-of-Balance in Many Areas?

Our land development patterns create habitat deer prefer more than forested habitat. (Note that this is the opposite of the common misconception that "humans have displaced deer.")

- Our subdivisions, office parks, and infrastructure create more sunlit patches that grow plants favored by deer and provide a year-round landscaping buffet.
- We have sharply reduced human hunting and accessible land in recent decades

Deer evolved under intensive hunting and predatory pressure, which is why herds evolved to increase in size 30-60% *in a single year* when herd density and habitat allow.

DEER NEW JERSEY,

Let's Find Balance for Our Forests, Farms and Families

Mission: To achieve natural balance in New Jersey by leading a deer stewardship movement for the people, wildlife and land we love.

Vision: A future where New Jersey's land, wildlife, and communities thrive in natural balance—stewarded by the people who call this place home

We collaborate to support stewardship of deer towards a balance with biological and cultural goals

www.deernj.org