

Three Things to help our White-Tailed Deer get through the Winter season

1) Do Not Feed Them

Backyard deer feeding may seem like a pleasant way for SRP-W residents to connect with nature. However, deer are wild animals so artificially feeding them can actually harm them. They have very sensitive stomachs that are accustomed to the natural foods they have been eating for thousands of years. As such they are not able to digest human processed food or scraps from your kitchen. Feeding deer any corn or bread, which is full of starch, can disrupt the delicate balance of their stomach microbiome, causing them to vomit or get diarrhea.

2) Do Not Feed Them

Feeding a few deer can quickly lead to more coming into your yard looking for handouts. This concentrates an unnaturally high number of deer in close contact, which increases the chance of disease being spread amongst the herd. One very serious issue is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) which is fatal to deer as it attacks their nervous system. The disease is currently affecting deer in Pennsylvania and the longer we can keep it out of SRP-W, the better.

One illness that humans can contract easier from higher deer populations is Lyme Disease. Deer are a host species of ticks which spread the bacteria which then causes the Lyme infection. You may get sick and think you just have the flu. However, increased Lyme symptoms of fatigue and joint pain in residents are a possibility with increased deer populations.

3) Do Not Feed Them

Feeding deer will upset the herd numbers and bring in larger populations in our community and closer to the ClubHouse garden projects. Here they can easily devour the plants and subsequent hard work of the Garden Committee's volunteers. Large numbers of deer also result in greater plant damage in residents' yards.

Also, according to AAA yearly data every year more than 30,000 car accidents occur in NJ that involve hitting (or being hit by) a deer. So every time you see a dead deer near the road; think of someone's car in the repair shop; or worse, think of the driver of that car possibly in the hospital. Nature has been providing precisely what is needed for deer to have a healthy population and get through the winter without any handouts from us residents.

If you know of a resident who is harming our deer by artificially feeding them, you can anonymously call Berkeley Township Animal Control (732) 797-1413. They will send someone out to educate that person.

