

FAQs

Comprehensive Deer Management Professional Sharpshooting 2019

Mt. Lebanon has signed a contract with White Buffalo Inc. to cull the community's deer population using sharpshooting as part of its annual comprehensive deer management program. The Pennsylvania Game Commission issues a special use deer control-political subdivision permit for this activity. Information about the municipality's comprehensive program, the planned sharpshooting phase, safety features and time frames follows.

Why is it necessary to reduce the size of Mt. Lebanon's deer herd? In the interest of public safety, Mt. Lebanon's elected officials implemented a comprehensive deer management plan with the goal of reducing the number of deer/vehicular crashes. A controlled archery hunt took place in fall 2018; a cull using sharpshooting will follow. The number of deer/vehicular crashes, often with injuries and/or property damage increased dramatically as the deer population grew in Mt. Lebanon's densely developed 6.2 square miles. In addition to the danger of deer-vehicular collisions, overpopulation of deer raises public concern about Lyme disease and the over-browsing of native vegetation.

Who made the decision to cull the herd? Did the public have input? Mt. Lebanon's elected officials voted to cull the deer herd after extensive study. Residents had the opportunity to comment at many Commission meetings. There were televised public forums and hearings. The deer management issue also was featured prominently in **mtl** media, including *Mt. Lebanon Magazine* and on www.mtlebanon.org, where FAQs and the deer management plan are regularly posted. Newspapers and television stations covered the issue in a regional context..

What options were considered? Before making a decision, municipal staff and commissioners talked with many professionals regarding fertility control research, controlled hunting and professional sharpshooting. The Commission has maintained that although fertility control might be an option Mt. Lebanon and the Pennsylvania Game Commission could consider in the future, sharpshooting in conjunction with the organized archery hunting is the best course of action for now. Mt. Lebanon conducted a similar program involving archery and sharpshooting in late 2017 and early 2018, safely removing 82 deer.

When will the sharpshooting phase begin and end? The sharpshooting phase begins after the archery hunt concludes. The municipality's special use deer control political subdivision permit from the Pennsylvania Game Commission for the sharpshooting phase runs from February 1 - March 31, 2019.

Who are the culling agents and how were they certified? Certified wildlife biologists and professional field technicians conduct the cull. White Buffalo Inc., which has been involved with many suburban deer management programs across the country, is responsible for the sharpshooting effort and has qualified all the sharpshooters. The Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator Association also has certified these personnel as suburban marksmen.

Where and how does culling take place? White Buffalo Inc. specialists work on private property donated for the purpose, as well as in designated municipal parks. Parks include the municipal golf course, McNeilly Park, Robb Hollow Park and the adjacent public works property, and the conservation district on Connor Road. White Buffalo specialists set out bait for the deer and then shoot from fixed, elevated positions, ensuring that the bullets will not stray beyond the targets. They use suppressed rifles so that noise does not disrupt the community.

At what times and days does shooting occur? The special use deer control political subdivision permit allows culling activities to take place seven days a week. Shooting takes place in the late afternoon and after dark.

What criteria are used to determine if a private property can be part of the program? A shooting location must ensure safe operations. Discretion also is an important factor to ensure the least disruption to residents. Finally, support and cooperation from proximate landowners is required to avoid conflicts between neighbors. In addition to White Buffalo personnel, the Mt. Lebanon Police Department inspects each proposed site. The goal of the MLPD's involvement in site inspections and operational oversight during deer management is to maximize public safety for our community.

What ensures that an injured deer will not run for a while, ending up injured or dying on someone else's property? Deer are shot as per American Veterinary Medical Association guidelines for euthanasia. The method used ensures that no deer will exit a property on which permission has been granted. White Buffalo Inc. has used these methods to lethally remove more than 10,000 deer in developed environments similar to Mt. Lebanon.

What happens to the deer that are harvested? The deer are removed immediately and taken to a local processor, with the meat then donated to the organization Hunters Sharing the Harvest or its designated agents.

How can we be sure residents are safe? White Buffalo Inc. has been using these methods for nearly two decades to control deer in many different environments, and no injuries or deaths have ever resulted. White Buffalo Inc. is recognized nationally as the leading expert in this discipline and has trained several law enforcement agencies in deer sharpshooting techniques. The sharpshooting occurs only from fixed, elevated positions (providing an earthen backdrop at all times) and specialists use frangible bullets designed to prevent ricochets—both important safety measures. Police and the local wildlife conservation officer are notified of the dates and times of anticipated deer removal.

Is this approach humane? White Buffalo Inc. uses only American Veterinary Medical Association approved techniques to euthanize deer.

Does culling take place near schools? How are schools and other parties who might be concerned notified of the cull? No culling takes place near schools or safe walking routes. Various parties are notified by letter, email or phone call, as was the case with the archery hunt. Updates are posted at www.mtlebanon.org as appropriate.

How much will this sharpshooting program cost taxpayers? The total cost is \$59,605.

What should I do if I hear or see something that frightens me? Call 911 immediately.

Where can I get additional information? Pennsylvania Game Commission Deer Management Program: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/deer/11949> or White Buffalo Inc.: www.whitebuffaloinc.org.

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