

Deer

No wild animal in North Carolina is as recognizable as the white-tailed deer. Deer are so adaptable they are found in almost any type of habitat. Without some control, deer populations grow larger than their habitat can support, causing mass starvation and disease in herds, as well as severe crop depredation and overgrazing of habitat.

What kind of damage is caused by deer? Deer problems are usually seasonal and typically worse in the winter when food is scarce. During years with poor mast crops, deer subsist primarily by browsing on herbaceous plants which could result in increased depredation problems in residential areas. Deer can also cause extensive damage to agricultural crops.

Can a WCA write a depredation permit? No, wildlife damage control agents are not authorized to write depredation permits for big game species. Depredation permits for deer can only be issued by [district biologists](#) or [wildlife enforcement officers](#). The individual incurring the property damage can have a WCA listed as a second party on the depredation permit.

Can deer be relocated? No, deer cannot be relocated.

What can I do with a sick or injured deer? If you receive a report of a severely sick or injured deer, contact the NC Wildlife Helpline at 866-318-2401 (Mon.-Fri. 8 am-5 pm) or the Wildlife Enforcement Division at 800-622-7132. If an adult deer has a non-life-threatening injury, advise the individual to leave the deer alone.

If you receive a report from someone who has picked up a potentially orphaned fawn within the past few hours, it should be returned to its original location and left alone. Does frequently leave young fawns alone for long periods of time while they forage. If the caller is certain that the mother is dead, or the fawn has been in the same location over 48 hrs. and clearly distressed, advise caller to contact a [licensed fawn rehabilitator](#).

Are there safety concerns? Yes, deer are very powerful animals and caution should be taken around bucks in the rutting season and does that are rearing fawns.

Non-lethal Options:

- Education
 - See the [General Considerations for Handling Wildlife](#) document for general ways to prevent damage from wildlife.
- Exclusion
 - An adult deer can easily jump 7 ft. or higher and can squeeze through small gaps in vertical or horizontal slatted fences. While short fences (4 ft.) may be effective at reducing damage in very small areas or around individual trees or shrubs, a “deer proof” fence would need to be 8 ft. or taller and constructed of strong impenetrable material like welded wire or chain link to be effective long-term. To see examples of fencing to exclude deer, visit <https://www.ncwildlife.org/Learning/Species/Mammals/Whitetail-Deer/Fencing-to-Exclude-Deer> and see figures below.

Lethal Options:

- Deer may be taken during the established hunting season with a state hunting license and big game harvest report card. A landowner does not need to purchase a hunting license to hunt on his/her own property.
- Deer in the act of causing property damage may be shot by the landowner without a depredation permit (where permitted by local law). The edible portions of deer may be kept for consumption but cannot be transported from the property where the depredations occurred without a depredation permit. The deer meat cannot be given to another individual without a depredation permit. The non-edible parts including head, hide, feet, and antlers may not be kept and must be disposed of.
- Depredation permits can only be issued through district biologists or wildlife enforcement officers.
 - A WCA can be listed as a second party, allowing them to do the removal.

