



Urban Deer in Williams Lake

Resident Information Brochure



www.williamslake.ca

Introduction

In Williams Lake, mule deer are the most widely distributed deer and have managed to make Williams Lake, and area, home thanks to abundant food sources, availability of cover and limited presence of large predators.

Mule Deer

Population estimates for the northern populations of mule deer in BC are between 20,000 to 25,000 deer. Mule deer are the largest of BC's deer, standing 90-100cm at the shoulder and weighing an average of 80kg. Bucks in prime physical condition may weigh as much as 180kg.

Habitat

Many enjoy seeing deer where they live, however, once deer establish in a neighborhood it is particularly difficult to remove them. Once established in your neighborhood, deer: can decimate your shrubs, gardens and landscaping; increase chances of vehicle collisions; transport ticks close to your home; harm pets (in particular dogs); attract large predators. Here are a few tips to help discourage deer from taking up residence in your community.

- Fencing. Fence off fruit trees and gardens to keep deer out. This will require a high and/or electrified fence.

- Do not feed deer. This does not help deer. Deer have ample food supplies in the wild and, in fact, supplementing that food supply can trigger an increase in population that is not sustainable in the wild, thereby potentially harming deer in the long term.

- Remove excessive cover from your yard. Deer require cover to safely travel through communities and bed down. By keeping the vegetation in your yards trimmed, you can discourage deer from staying.

- Utilize motion activated lights and/or sprinklers. Used randomly, these can dissuade deer from using your yard.

- Chase deer away from your property. Whenever deer appear, chase them away. Whatever benefits your yard may have been providing to deer will no longer be worth the energy they need to expend to escape.

- Select non-fruit bearing trees for your yard. Collect all fruit and windfall from your existing fruit trees. If you are unable to do this, please consider removing the fruit trees from your property, blowing off blossoms in the spring so the trees do not produce fruit, or contacting a local gleaning program to assist in the collection of your fruit.

Safety

Deer are wild animals. You should never approach deer, especially those with young, as they may attack. Laying their ears back and lowering their head can be signs of an impending attack. If you are attacked by a deer, try to stay upright, cover your head with your arms and move to shelter. If you are concerned for your safety or have sighted deer in your neighbourhood that are no longer afraid of people or pets, please report them to the

**Conservation Officer
Service by calling 1-
877-952-7277.**

Tips for reducing deer conflict in your yard and garden:

- Plan ahead. If you have not yet planted your garden, you can consider using less attractive species (cedar hedges are attractive to deer and do not maintain their form or recover well from browsing), planting plants in a way that limits accessibility by the deer to the plants, and installing fencing.

Talk to your landscape professional or visit a local nursery to find out more about repellants and deer resistant plants.

- Install fencing. Fencing, although initially costly, is the most cost effective option in the long term as it is the most effective and, if built appropriately to limit deer access, will result in less property damage and plant replacement over the years.

- Cover shrubs and trees. Burlap or sheeting covering your shrubs and plants over the winter months can be used to create a barrier that limits browsing. Burlap and sheeting is not appropriate for use during summer months as it can reduce growth. Temporary fencing, or netting during the growing season, is both more suitable and more aesthetically pleasing. Barriers, whether they be burlap or netting, should start close to the ground and extend past the reach of deer, at least 1.3m. The benefit to barriers is that they are reusable year to year and are definitely less expensive than replacement of shrubs and trees and other garden plants. In gardens, consider using chicken or other wire with a mesh size < 4cm. Plants can be wrapped individually or large strips can be installed around entire rows or hedges.

- Plant less palatable or desirable species. It is important when selecting these species to consider native plant species first and avoid any invasive non-native plant

species. Shrub and tree species noted for being less desirable and susceptible to browse are blue spruce, juniper or paper birch. If you want to plant perennials, mint and columbine are two native species considered less desirable to deer. Consult your local nursery to discuss which plant varieties will grow best in your region. Remember, however, that in the end deer can and will eat almost anything given the right set of circumstances.

- Scare them away. Motion activated sprinklers and or lights can help deter deer from your property.

- Chase them off your property. Leashed dogs can be used to assist.

Additional Information

**British Columbia Conservation
Foundation – Wildsafe BC**
<https://wildsafebc.com/deer/>

Ministry of Environment
[http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/
environment/plants-animals-
ecosystems/wildlife/human-wildlife-
conflict/staying-safe-around-
wildlife/deer-elk-and-moose-ungulate](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/human-wildlife-conflict/staying-safe-around-wildlife/deer-elk-and-moose-ungulate)

**Source: WildsafeBC.com