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Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township

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Police warn about deer hunting in suburbs

Bow and arrow hunting season runs through Jan. 1, but is illegal in most local cities

By Chris Jackett
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With deer hunting season switching to archery only for Dec. 1-Jan. 1, law enforcement officials warn residents that hunting is a different story in more highly populated areas such as the Birmingham-Bloomfield area.

Prior to the Nov. 15-30 firearm season, deer hunters' archery season ran from Oct. 1-Nov. 14. There were a handful of incidents in the region in which hunters shot deer with arrows in local backyards, a practice that poses several safety and sensitivity concerns for local children.

At about 2 p.m. Oct. 31, a dead deer was found in the 1000 block of Trowbridge in Bloomfield Hills. The large buck had died after being shot with an arrow. Police tracked a trail of blood to a bait pile and hunting stand in the backyard of a nearby residence.

"I guess the homeowner gave the guy permission, and he didn't know he couldn't do that," Bloomfield Hills Police Chief Richard Matott said of the man who had done housework for the resident and asked for permission afterward.

Matott said it was the first incident in Bloomfield Hills that he's seen in his 29 years with the city. There were similar incidents in Troy and Farmington Hills recently. Matott said bait piles were legal this year, but hunting was not in many areas.

"Throughout the state, they had issues and they were limited," Matott said. "Hunting is actually regulated by the state. We're in the process of revising local ordinances."

The current ordinance in Bloomfield Hills prohibits hunting. Additionally, a person cannot carry a firearm or bow and arrow for the purpose of hunting. Crossbows will be included in the revised ordinance, violation of which is a misdemeanor.

“We’re just waiting to see. We’ve been watching, but nothing’s come to light,” Matott said of other instances that could help shape the ordinance revision.

On Oct. 7 in the 1400 block of Sodom Lake Drive in Bloomfield Township, a resident found a dead deer in the wooded area behind a house.

“A large deer was discovered in the wooded area behind a property with an arrow in it,” Bloomfield Township Deputy Chief Geof Gaudard said, noting that the buck had been there for more than a day, so its path had gone cold.

Gaudard echoed Matott about the state’s Department of Natural Resources regulating hunting, but the township does have some restrictions in place.

“We have an ordinance that prohibits use of a firearm in the township,” Gaudard said. “A bow and arrow is not considered a firearm.”

He said there are consistently one or two incidences each year.

In nearby Farmington Hills, three deer were shot by two different hunters Oct. 3, 9 and 23 in the neighborhood northwest of Orchard Lake and Eight Mile roads. In two of the cases, the deer were walking around with arrows protruding from their heads, while the third was discovered dead in someone’s front yard. Separate bait piles were discovered in the area Oct. 14 and 16.

Hunting with a firearm is illegal in both Farmington and Farmington Hills. Bow hunting is illegal in Farmington, and is only legal in Farmington Hills if it takes place 100 yards from all buildings, which eliminates about 95-97 percent of the city, according to Farmington Hills Police Chief Chuck Nebus. City officials are looking at changing that to include the entire city.

Nebus said two suspects have been spoken to, but no charges will be filed because they were not caught in the act.

Although no arrows were found, Birmingham Police Cmdr. Terry Kiernan said his city has had to “terminate” two deer in the past month that were both likely victims of car accidents.

Kiernan, Beverly Hills Public Safety Director Karl Woodard and Franklin-Bingham Farms Police Chief Pat Browne each said their municipalities have ordinances in place to prohibit hunting, regardless of weapon used. Woodard and Browne said there have been no problems in their villages.

Staff Writer David Wallace contributed to this story.

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