

To the Editor:

I'm responding to recent letters regarding deer culling in Ferrysburg. I vacation in Grand Haven and have many friends there.

I've hunted for many years, and have studied suburban deer management for the last ten years. I have consulted closely with some of the world's leading experts on suburban deer management, i.e. Jay Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., Director of Biology Conservation *ZooMontana* and Allen Rutberg, Ph.D., Research Professor, Center for Animals and Public Policy, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. Based on my experience, I concur with Chuck Nagtzaam's comments regarding the *Reproductive Dynamics Among Disjunct White-Tailed Deer herds in Florida* study, and disagree with Council Member Tim Scarpino's interpretation. Compensatory reproduction in hunted deer populations is a well-established scientific fact in the wildlife management community.

In addition, I was very disturbed by Mr. Scarpino's dismissive attitude toward the potential dangers of a deer cull to Ferrysburg residents. I believe he called these dangers a "myth". I think the first responsibility of a council member is the safety of the families and children that reside in his community. In my opinion, the risks of using lethal weapons in a densely populated suburban community are extremely high, and an accident waiting to happen. You can't manage a misfired or ricochet bullet from a high-powered rifle, or razor sharp arrow from a bow. All you have to do is look at the statistics of accidental deaths from hunting accidents.

I will give just one example of a horrific accident that happened in my state of Pennsylvania. On November 20, 2004, Casey Kantner, who was 18 years old and pregnant, was struck in the head while sitting in a car in her driveway. The shot was traced to a hunter, who was hunting on a farm a half-mile away when he fired at a deer. A misfired or ricochet bullet can be deadly for up to 2 miles or more. In addition, companion animals are often the innocent victims of bowhunters who mistaken them for deer.

Deer populations fluctuate, but stabilize to the available food supply. I have not found any suburban culling programs that have been successful in permanently reducing deer populations. Once you start a culling program, it will have to be carried out annually forever. This turns a safe community into a private hunting preserve, and puts the safety of families, children and companion animals at risk. There are a number of proven non-lethal methods available to address deer browsing and other deer/human conflicts. I would highly recommend that the City of Ferrysburg explore these safe and effective solutions.

George Nagle