

Deer culling underway in Franklin Park, McCandless

by NATALIE BENEVIAT

The deer management season is under way in Franklin Park, McCandless and Ross, according to Mike Clinebell, an owner and operator of Suburban Whitetail Management.

Suburban Whitetail Management of Wexford provides bow hunting programs to manage deer populations in those communities, Clinebell said.

For a controlled archery hunt program to be successful, the company needs to expand the amount of private property that is open to hunt. Finding hunters is not the problem.

"We always have a waiting list of hunters. The real problem is having enough landowners open up their property to access for hunting," Clinebell said.

The management season began last month. It's too early to tell if there are more deer this season or not. Once hunters send in their reports, the company will get a better picture of the population, Clinebell said.

There is no minimum or maximum number set on how many deer it harvests.

"With the high population of deer, we are more concerned at this point in lowering deer numbers," he said.

The company has been conducting hunts in McCandless since 2021, in Ross since 2020 and Franklin Park since 2019, Clinebell said.

Archery deer hunting season in Pennsylvania runs from September to the end of January, Clinebell said. It takes a

few seasons for the results to be noticeable.

Franklin Park will meet with the Suburban Whitetail Management soon to review the season, according to Franklin Park Mayor Dennis O'Keefe.

It seems the borough has received more calls from residents about deer, according to Franklin Park borough manager Rege Ebner. Other than culling numbers through the controlled archery hunt, "there aren't many options," he said.

McCandless passed a no-deer-feeding ordinance in 2021, with possible fines up to \$500. Franklin Park has a deer feeding ordinance with possible fines ranging from \$100 to \$1,000, according to borough records.

Suburban Whitetail Management must follow the rules of the state Game Commission. Hunting is at no cost to the homeowner or township. The company receives funding from fees paid by participating hunters.

Potential hunters contact the company and apply to be a hunter in the program. In Allegheny County, each hunter must buy a tag to kill a deer. When a deer is tagged, it means it is a successful hunt. In Allegheny County, a hunter is allowed to have several doe or female tags, but only one buck, or male, tag per season, said Luke Leonard, who owns Suburban Whitetail Management with Clinebell.

Suburban Wildlife Management requires a hunter to donate every first and third deer harvested to the Hunters Sharing Harvest program.

The company potentially can access all land owned by a municipality that signed up for the program, including parks, public and vacant land.

"Our bylaws are in place, and those mitigate any potential for safety concerns both on park properties and nonpark property. Hunters have been hunting park properties for years. Most of the time residents and parkgoers don't even have a clue that it's happening," Clinebell said.

Owners of private property, residential or business, can contact the company about culling deer, but not all private property is suitable to hunt. Hunters cannot be within 50 feet of a structure unless they get written permission from a neighbor. So it is hard to hunt on a smaller property unless neighbors permit it.

The townships and municipalities involved in the program are also provided harvest counts by Suburban Whitetail Management.

A minimum of 3 total acres is a suitable property to allow the deer time to expire. Hunting can occur on smaller parcels if the appropriate space and safety requirements are met, according to Clinebell.

People interested in having their property included in the management program can contact Suburban Whitetail Management at suburbanwhitetailpa@gmail.com or they can contact their respective municipality or township.

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