

OUTDOORS

DNR advises against feeding deer this winter

DNR STAFF REPORT

Despite recent heavy snowfall across much of northern Minnesota and deer populations being below target in some areas, residents are advised against feeding deer this winter, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources said.

Feeding deer can be well-intentioned, but can have detrimental effects and cause more harm to the animals than if they were left alone and allowed to draw on their natural survival

instincts.

Supplemental feeding creates problems in four major ways.

**BEHAVIOR CHANGES:**

- Supplemental feeding can make wild animals less fearful of humans, delay winter migration and even result in starvation if animals have not migrated to wintering areas and feeding ceases.
- Supplemental feeding can result in enterotoxaemia – a fatal disease commonly called grain overload.

**ANIMAL CONCENTRATION:**

- Tight concentrations of deer feeding in the same area dramatically increases the odds of disease spreading through a herd by nose-to-nose contact or eating feed contaminated by another animal's disease-carrying saliva.
- Unnaturally concentrating deer can also attract their predators in larger numbers.
- Deer that congregate in unnaturally high numbers can retard forest regeneration and change plant species composition through

overbrowsing, and cause garden and crop damage.

**HUMAN CONFLICT:**

- Drawing animals into closer contact with people and homes can increase rates of collision with vehicles, and cause conflict between neighbors when gardens and ornamental plants are destroyed by habituated deer.

**TAXPAYER EXPENSE:**

- Millions of taxpayer dollars are used each year to fund state and federal efforts to monitor, minimize

and attempt to eliminate diseases that affect public wildlife and private livestock.

- Rebuilding deer densities in areas that are below population targets is best done by managing the deer harvest and ensuring adequate habitat for healthy reproduction. Supplemental feeding is not a sustainable way to influence deer populations for the long-term. In most cases, allowing deer numbers to rebuild naturally is the best way to foster a strong and healthy animal population.

VNP TRAIL REPORT

The only snowmobile trail open and staked in Voyageurs National Park is the green trail from Rainy Lake/Black Bay to Kabetogama Lake to Ash River.

All other snowmobile trails are closed. Ice checking continues throughout the park. Most snowshoe and ski trails are open, packed, but not yet tracked.

The snowmobile speed limit within Voyageurs National Park is 45 mph on frozen lake surfaces and 25 mph on all overland portages.

Weekly winter trail conditions reports are available at [www.nps.gov/voya](http://www.nps.gov/voya).

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