

Deer in Northwest Austin - Observations and Recommendations

*Presented by DeerAustin
to the
Austin City Council
Public Health and Human Services Committee*

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Deer-involved collisions are down

Deer-Involved Collision Reports are down in Northwest Austin and city wide

	<u>78731 zip code</u>	<u>City wide</u>
2009	7	52
2010	10	63
2011	4	37

Dead Deer Pick-up Reports are down in 78731 and stable city wide

	<u>78731 zip code</u>	<u>City wide</u>
2009	202	607
2010	168	517
2011	121	559

** Collisions and pick ups are down despite other contributing factors, including publication of 311 for pick up, increased traffic, and speeding*

There are few complaints about feeding violations

Current City Statistics: IFODO Complaint/Enforcement Report

Total number of complaints, city wide

2009	32 complaints (18 addresses)
2010	20 complaints (12 addresses)
2011	23 complaints (16 addresses)

There have been 6 citations, resulting in 4 dismissals, 1 deferral, and 1 fine.

NWACA does not speak for the neighborhood or the city on this issue

NWACA Statistics

- “About 500” households out of 5000 in the NWACA boundaries are members
- 198 households voted in 2010 to “reduce the deer population by the most humane method possible”

City of Austin Initiatives

- March 2007 - City Council resolved to obtain National Wildlife Federation community level certification
- March 2009 – Austin was recognized as a certified wildlife habitat community
- March 2012 - The City of Austin has over 1,700 certified wildlife habitats

Summary observations

- Deer “issues” are not increasing and few complain;
- Fewer than 4% of the households in the NWACA boundaries and less than ½ of the NWACA membership voted to reduce the deer population; and
- NWACA’s recommendations to amend the No Feeding Ordinance conflict with established city policy.

Recommendations

- I. Make no changes to the existing No Feeding Ordinance**
- II. Focus city efforts on existing health and safety laws, including the Community Education component of the No Feeding Ordinance**
- III. Establish a city process to coordinate stakeholder interests on deer issues**

I. Make no changes to the existing No Feeding Ordinance

- Prohibiting water conflicts with the certified wildlife habitat that initiative.
- Prohibiting water would make any urn, rain barrel, fountain, birdbath, kiddy pool or pond in the city a potential violation of the ordinance, subject to a fine.
- Deleting the intent requirement would outlaw some composting and impact feral cat programs.
- Changing “may” to “shall” eliminates city officials’ necessary discretion, strains resources and potentially places city employees in unsafe situations.
- Increasing the fine may make it less likely that citizens will be fined.

If a citizen does not think the No-Feeding Ordinance is being adequately enforced by the city, there is relief in the law now: the citizen may file a written complaint directly in Municipal Court.

II. Focus city efforts on enforcing existing health and safety laws

- **Community Education under the No Feeding Ordinance**
- **Leash laws**
- **Speeding in the neighborhood**

Community Education

The goal of the ordinance should not be to increase the number of citations, but to provide community education through a positive campaign that promotes safety and awareness.

Community Education

- Use established city communication outlets for education. Create slogans, collateral and signage. Involve representatives from HHS, Public Safety, APD and PARD.
- Neighborhood distribution channels are limited; use the HHS web site, utility bill web site and other frequently visited city web sites as well as media and social networking outlets.
- Timely, targeted, fact-based education is needed to be effective and should include education for people who do not like deer.

Community Education

What do we mean by targeted, timely, fact-based education?

- Fawning season is April through June. Now is the time to get the word out to leave the fawns alone.**
- For people who do not want deer in their yards, now is the time to use deer repellents and mend fences.**

Other existing laws

- **Unrestrained dogs:** Off leash dogs are a primary cause of deer conflicts
- **Speeding in the neighborhood:** During 2010, the NWACA Transportation Committee asked APD for speed studies, which were conducted on four streets in Northwest Hills.

Other existing laws

A summary of the results of the speed studies:

- 36% of drivers were speeding on Burney Drive;
top speed was 60 mph in a 30 mph zone
- 43% of drivers were speeding on Far West Blvd;
top speed was 58 mph in a 30 mph zone
- 46% of drivers were speeding on Greystone Drive;
top speed was 50 mph in a 30 mph zone
- 74% of drivers were speeding on Mesa Drive;
top speed was 54 mph in a 30 mph zone

III. Establish a city process to coordinate stakeholder interests

- Create a deer-related listserve to keep neighbors informed of action.
- Refer issues for adequate stakeholder input and review prior to bringing them to council. The Austin Animal Advisory Commission is one possible resource for coordinating this effort.
- Consider clarification of an official city position regarding deer in Austin.

Contact information

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