

## **MULE DEER AVERSION CONDITIONING PROGRAM**

### **Issue**

An assessment and methodology report for implementing a Mule Deer Aversion Conditioning Program in the Town of Okotoks is provided for Council consideration.

### **Motion Proposed by Administration**

That the decision regarding implementation of a Deer Aversion Conditioning Program be delayed until after the next citizen survey, scheduled for the first quarter of 2023.

### **Report, Analysis and Financial Implications**

Of the variety of mid to long-term strategies identified in the 2022-2025 Urban Deer Management Strategy and Action Plan, aversion conditioning is being further explored as it is likely the method most readily accepted by residents due to its humane approach and ease of implementation.

A wildlife consultant, Eagle Creek Wildlife Control, was enlisted to conduct this assessment and will be in attendance to present the Assessment and Methodology Report and provide details as to what a deer aversion conditioning program would entail within the Town and associated costs.

As identified in the 2022 Citizen Satisfaction Survey, wildlife safety was identified as a top theme under areas of concern. Combined with the short-term strategies already enlisted, implementation of a mule deer aversion conditioning program may improve citizens' sense of safety around wildlife when outdoors in Okotoks.

The next citizen survey on urban deer is planned for January 2023. Similar questions will be asked as prior surveys to gauge if citizen/deer interactions have changed since implementation of other short term strategies. Specifically, this survey will also ask questions about the impact of the fencing pilot on deer behaviour to determine if the recommended long term steps are required to reduce the impact of deer in the future.

### **Strategic Plan Goals**

|                          |  |                                     |                                  |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Manage Community Growth                  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Provide Strong Governance        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Provide Quality Community Infrastructure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Healthy and Safe Community       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Enhance Organizational Excellence        | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Foster Economic Vitality         |
|                          |  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Promote Environmental Excellence |

### **Governing Policies/Bylaws/Legislation or Agreements**

Deer and Wildlife Feeding and Attractants Bylaw 28-21

Urban Deer Task Force Final Report and Recommendations

<https://www.okotoks.ca/sites/default/files/2021-05/2021-05-10-UDTF%20Final%20Report.pdf>

## **Public Participation Strategy**

A comprehensive communications plan would be developed considering all stakeholders using the International Association of Public Participation toolkit.

## **Alternatives for Consideration**

1. Proceed with a deer aversion conditioning program with an annual budget of \$85,000 to be added as a 3 year on-ramp pilot project to the budget process in 2023.

Or

2. Delay the decision until after the next round of public engagement, to proceed with a deer aversion conditioning program pilot

Or

3. Accept the Mule Deer Aversion Conditioning Program report as information.

## **CAO Comments**

Council has three alternatives to consider at this point. Go now, don't go or go later based upon some new information. Council will need to weigh the potential benefits of an aversion conditioning program against the risks. As this program will be highly controversial, before proceeding Administration is recommending a public participation process to determine if the short term strategies implemented in the last two (2) years have shifted the impacts of deer to a satisfactory level. Council may feel that they have enough information to make the decision now. If Council does choose to proceed the \$85,000 would be added as a 3 year on ramp pilot program to the 2023 budget process. The pilot would be reviewed at the end of that period to determine if this should become a permanent service level in Okotoks.

## **Attachment(s)**

1. Mule Deer Aversion Conditioning Assessment and Methodology Report
2. Costing for Mule Deer Aversion Program

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