

## A Citizens Guide to Safe Bow and Arrow Hunting for Suburban Neighborhoods in Montgomery County, Maryland

As deer populations have increased, suburban and urban areas face too many deer. In some suburbs, the deer population exceeds 400 animals per square mile, while the carrying capacity of the land is about 40 animals per square mile. Although pleasing to watch, large numbers of free roaming deer increase the risk of human injury from deer-vehicle collisions. They spread debilitating and costly diseases such as Lyme, Babesiosis, and Ehrlichia Chaffensis. Deer cause great damage each year to landscaping in our yards. Worse, deer have destroyed the understory of many of our regional, community and stream valley parks, denuding hillsides of native plants, destroying habitat for other species, accelerating soil erosion and promoting the takeover of invasive species. Some naturalists now consider overabundant deer as significant a threat to the bird population as climate change. And too many young deer make your neighborhood very attractive for predators such as coyotes to move in – a situation we are beginning to experience in Montgomery County.

**YOU CAN HELP CHANGE THIS FOR THE BETTER.** Other options for deer management such as feeding, exclusionary fencing and chemical “birth control” are impractical and prohibitively expensive. Regulated hunting, specifically bowhunting, is a safe, ethical, humane and efficient method for decreasing the number of deer in our residential neighborhoods. It provides deer population control at the least cost because bow hunters do the “work” of removing deer as a public service.

### **THE BOWHUNTING OPTION**

Bowhunting has been shown to be a safe, effective way to decrease the size of suburban deer herds. Hundreds of metro areas including Fairfax County, Virginia, Columbus, Ohio, the Pittsburgh suburbs, and many cities in Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin and Canada allow bowhunting. Few problems and no accidents have been reported. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources supports the use of bowhunting to curb deer populations.

### **WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW**

- National surveys show that most deer harvested with a bow are shot at distances of 20 yards or less, which makes it ideal for hunting in and around urban/suburban areas.
- Bowhunters typically hunt from elevated positions or tree stands which means an arrow is shot downward into the target or into the ground.
- A hunting arrow, under most conditions, cannot travel any appreciable distance once it hits even a twig or small limb.
- Archery is one of the safest sports in the United States. Most accidents involve the bowhunter falling out of a tree stand. In Maryland and Virginia there have been no recorded incidents involving injury to persons, pets or property caused by a bowhunter.
- Deer taken by reputable hunters are never “wasted.” All the meat (venison) is used, either by hunter or by donation to local food banks, soup kitchens and shelters through an organization called Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH.ORG).
- Property owners who wish to obtain venison may do so through arrangement with their hunter.

## **GETTING STARTED**

Many individuals know little about hunting and, most particularly, bowhunting. Bowhunting in residential neighborhoods should never be undertaken by amateurs, but left to well-trained, skilled sportsmen.

**HOW TO FIND A RELIABLE BOWHUNTER** In Montgomery County, several groups can link you to a bowhunter. The Animal Connection Deer Management Team – ACDMT – is an organization of seasoned, veteran bowhunters with strict rules and enforcement to ensure the safety of hunters and the public. Most members of ACDMT are members of the Maryland Bowhunters Society, an organization dedicated to preserving and promoting safe and responsible bowhunting; educating the non-hunting public about the role of the bowhunter in wildlife management and conservation; and educating bowhunters in safety, shooting skills, hunting techniques and landowner relations. Both groups strongly advocate ethical bowhunting within the laws of the jurisdiction hunted. Learn more about the ACDMT from their website at [www.acdmt.org](http://www.acdmt.org) and contact them via email at [deer.help@acdmt.org](mailto:deer.help@acdmt.org). A third group, the Bow Hunting Fire Fighters of Maryland, can be contacted through the website [www.BHFFMD.com](http://www.BHFFMD.com)

**MEET WITH A BOWHUNTER** Not every suburban yard is appropriate for bowhunting. The bowhunter will first tell you if your property has a suitable location for hunting. If it does, the bowhunter should provide you with copies of his/her hunting license, safety certificate, a signed release of liability form, a copy of the permission form for you to sign; and copies of the permission form for your neighbors to sign, if needed. Your contract or agreement with the bowhunter may stipulate what days and times hunting may take place; how you will know the hunter is at work; where the hunter will be shooting from; where bait will be located; whether the hunter may field dress the animal and leave remains on your property or not; and whether you wish to be gifted with a deer for your own consumption.

**GET YOUR NEIGHBORS TO SUPPORT YOUR OBJECTIVE** Under Montgomery County law, all owners of inhabited property within 100 yards of the hunting location must give signed permission before hunting takes place. If your neighbors have questions or express reluctance, it will help if you hold a meeting with your neighbors and the bowhunter. The bowhunter can then explain how, where and when the hunting will take place. It is crucial that your neighbors understand that this form of hunting is safe, humane, and presents no risk to people, pets or property. They must provide you and the hunter with their signed permission forms agreeing to the hunting that will take place on your property. It is also wise to have their agreement that, in the rare event a deer is wounded and moves onto their property, the hunter may enter their property to euthanize and remove the deer.

Animal Connection Deer Management Team    [www.acdmt.org](http://www.acdmt.org)

Bow Hunting Fire Fighters of Maryland        [www.BHFFMD.com](http://www.BHFFMD.com)

Maryland Bowhunters Society                    [www.marylandbowhunterssociety.org](http://www.marylandbowhunterssociety.org)

