

**EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP
DEER MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 30, 2007**

The East Goshen Township Deer Management Commission held their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, April 30, 2007 at 7 PM at the East Goshen Township Building. In attendance were: Chair, Jim McRee, and members Steven DiAntonio, Ellen Sinclair, Susan Vanasse, Maria O'Hara, Walter Wujcik, Bob Huebner and Albert Zuccarello. Also in attendance were Mark Gordon (Zoning Officer) and Jack Yahraes (Municipal Authority).

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Chairman Jim McRee called the meeting to order at 7pm and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. Jim announced their newest member Bob Huebner, and introduced Doug Fearn from the Lyme Disease Association.

2. PRESENTATION

Doug Fearn said the Lyme Disease Association of Southeastern PA is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that was established 5 years ago with the purpose of education and prevention of lyme disease. The organization has five board members with many professional members. They meet every 3rd Wednesday at the Kennett Friends Meeting House and are open to the public. More information can be found at: www.lymepa.org.

A. What is Lyme Disease?

Mr. Fearn said lyme is a bacterial infection that is primarily spread by the bite of ticks, carried by deer. It can affect any system or organ of the body but is primarily a neurological disease. The CDC keeps track of lyme disease but estimates that only 1 in 10 cases are reported by doctors. Ticks also carry babesiosis, bartonella, ehrlichiosis and rocky mountain spotted fever, which are also commonly contracted by lyme disease victims.

B. Prevalence of Lyme Disease:

- A 2000 map of the U.S. showed PA, NJ, NY, RI, TX and CA with the highest lyme rates.
- Lyme disease is a worldwide problem. Chester County reports 209 per 100,000 and is top in the world according to a 2003 report. PA has been #1 in the U.S. for the past 3 years.
- In a small, independent survey of Pocopson Township residents (50% response) concluded that 1/2 of all households have someone with lyme disease. The numbers reflect the recognition of the problem vs. the incident rate. The youngest reported case was 3 years old, the oldest was 102 years old. School-age children and middle age adults have the highest incident rates.
- May has been declared Lyme Awareness Month in PA.
- May and June are the highest incidents months but ticks can be active any time during the year.
- Ellen asked what the chances were of contracting lyme disease if bitten by a tick but Mr. Fearn said there is some controversy about that citing that it could be minutes up to 72 hours but no good research is available to document it. Most lyme disease occurs in people's own yards. Gardening is the highest risk activity, as well as sitting on logs, tree stumps and stone walls.

C. Prevention:

- Vegetation Management – the highest risk areas are at the edge of your yard and the woods. Ticks need shady, damp areas to survive.
- 4-Post Feeder – was developed by the USDA and has been found that after two years of treatment, to be 97% effective. The PA Game Commission allows the five counties around Philadelphia year-round usage of the 4-Post feeder. Since most ticks are carried on the heads of deer, the feeder is highly effective, covering 40-50 acres per feeder. The insecticide used is permethrin (synthetic version) and is very safe.
- When in the woods, people should stay on trails, wear long pants, and use bug spray (deet).
- There is no immunity to lyme disease and even if you contract the disease, are treated and recover, you can still develop the disease again.

Public Comment:

Maria asked if reducing deer helped reduce lyme disease and Mr. Fearn said that the 4-post feeders were found to reduce the tick population by 97% so common sense would conclude that if you got rid of deer, you would get rid of ticks and therefore reduce lyme disease. One resident said mice and small birds seem to be more dangerous than deer. Although Mr. Fearn agreed that mice are the reservoir for ticks and the disease, he said deer amplify the tick population because they are such large carriers of ticks from place to place. Also, ticks feed on deer then reproduce so actually the more deer you have, the more ticks you have. Al pointed out that Dr. Kirby Stafford, Director of the Dept. of Agriculture, said in a 2005 Connecticut Report that the size of tick populations are directly related to the deer population. Treating ticks at the mice source with permethrin treated tubes is only effective in small controlled areas. Mr. Fearn agreed that lyme disease was not prevalent 50 years ago but as the deer population increases so seems to be the tick population. He said wood ticks have been found to carry lyme disease but they are not sure if it can be transmitted to humans. Deer do carry antibodies to lyme disease but they are not sure if they have symptoms.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Walter moved that the minutes of February 21, 2007 and March 19, 2007 be approved as corrected. Al seconded the motion. No further public comment or discussion was heard. The motion passed unanimously with one abstention by Bob Hepner. The minutes of the April 16th meeting will be reviewed at the next meeting.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

1. Draft Report "Working Copy"

Jim emailed a draft version of the DMC Report for the BOS to all members for review and asked for feedback. He included a table that breaks down deer numbers by zoning district. Maria said the references to the QDMA and Deer Forum was confusing and thought it would raise questions about the credibility of the figures. Mark said breaking down the deer population by district was complicated and wasn't sure if they had enough data to support such specific recommendations. He said 90% of the township is zoned residential and recommended using these numbers. Steve said deer numbers continue to fluctuate. Jim suggested removing the table.

Ellen said, since the 60 residents who complained in 2004, she is not convinced that there continues to be a problem. She previously requested a copy of public records of these complaints and has yet to receive any. Mark never received any requests for public records. Jim suggested getting them just for reference. Mark said there have only been a half a dozen complaints logged so far this year but noted that most complaints come in the fall.

2. Newsletter Survey

Jim suggested including a small postcard-size survey in the July newsletter issue asking if residents feel there “is” or “is not” a deer problem. Jim suggested keeping it really simple – only 2-3 questions and will ask the BOS for approval. Mark said the township website is being updated and they are still working on getting the link for the deer count aerial survey on-line. Maria suggested also including the survey on the township website. Jim said township staff could tabulate results by August. Ellen offered to help. Jim also suggested cross-referencing the location of responses to try and get a feel for where the township “hot spots” may be located.

5. DMC Decisions

Jim asked if members’ opinions had changed following the deer count. Maria does not feel there is a problem based on the numbers. Walt said it seems like a “small problem” and the numbers seem to reflect localized problems. Ellen thought the number would be higher and said private residents seem to be doing a good job of controlling the herds; she’s not sure hunting is the answer. Bob said hunting may be necessary somewhere later in the 10-year plan. He does perceive a problem in and around the township; he is concerned about accidents and lyme disease and believes we need a plan of action.

Sue said in 1995 there were 150 deer and has since doubled but there is less open space. Mark said the township open space is the same but there has been more private development. Al agreed that more of the deer habitat has been removed and that the number of problems and accidents has increased along with their numbers. Steve said there is a problem because East Goshen doesn’t have the acreage to support the herd. He said no one on the DMC is qualified to determine if the deer are malnourished but he said breeding of the young is unhealthy and the quality of the deer population seems to be getting worse. Jim he has been personally impacted with landscape damage. He perceives a problem but questions how much the township should invest. He senses split views on the DMC as well as among residents.

Jim reminded members that they only have two data points to go on. Mark discussed the deer situation with Rick Smith and they agreed that another survey may be needed in the future; parts of the western edge of the township were missed due to weather problems.

- Members took a vote: Does East Goshen have a deer problem? 6 YES, 2 NO

Al said safety seems to be the biggest concern and suggested restricting hunting near the residential areas; sticking to the woods. Bob suggested hunting in January when there may be less danger to children. Steve said you can extend hunting season but said hunting occurs year-round by private landowners. He agreed that Supplee is a narrow stretch but could support 2-3 hunters in there while still maintaining the 50-yd. safety zone. Ellen said deer do not die instantly when shot with an arrow and doesn’t want them in her yard. Steve said deer don’t die instantly with a gunshot wound either.

Jim suggested modeling a deer management program that could be adopted for township land and/or landowners. They can make recommendations to landowners without implementing a township management program. Ellen said private landowners already use their own hunters. Mark said putting together a model hunting program for private landowners only will be ineffective for the 500 acres of township open space and unacceptable by the BOS. Maria suggested implementing non-hunting steps and then re-evaluating in 18 months. Walt suggested phasing in a program and setting a deer number as a goal.

Maria asked who controlled the open space and Mark said the BOS and private landowners. She is concerned about controlling poachers. Mark agreed that they are trespassing illegally but they don't know about it unless someone calls, plus police aren't going to go walking back into marshes. Jim suggested encouraging residents to actively report poaching to police as these incidents would be given to the BOS. Ellen said a written report is always better than calling. Steve cautioned that sounds are misleading – gun shots can carry from far away and may very well be coming from a private land or construction tools or other things can sound similar to gun shots when they aren't. Mark said permitted hunters would help to police the areas for poachers.

Maria said the large landowners' hunting programs must be doing a good job since the deer numbers haven't gone up that much in 12 years and suggested sending out educational materials only at this point. Al said educational materials were good but in the meantime, the deer population continues to grow. He feels safety restrictions for hunting are the real issue. Jim cautioned that making too many restrictions would limit the effectiveness of a program.

Members discussed their desire to develop a hunting program. Ellen believes they are responsible for developing a structured model for the township or private landowners to use. Al said that although the 4-Post Feeder will help to reduce ticks and the spread of lyme disease, it does nothing to actually reduce the number of deer which continue to cause accidents; he sees hunting as a solution. Mark pointed out that Hershey's Mill is technically in the open space and private hunting does take place on the golf course. Public access to Hershey's Mill is open to any resident on foot.

Mark said the DMC could suggest that the BOS solicit bids for a deer management program. Jim said they could recommend the 4-Post Feeder and an educational program as part of their recommendation. Steve suggested local TV programming as a means of education but it was thought to be too expensive. Maria said running a two-night program at the high school would be free. Ellen also thinks it will increase trust with residents. Steve is worried about turn-out. Bob pointed out that it is a very polarized issue and there really isn't any best time of year to hold the meeting.

- Members took a vote: Should they develop a Deer Management Program Model? 6 YES, 2 NO

Jim said they need to decide what the program is and where it should be applied. Mark cautioned the DMC against pushing decisions back on the BOS; their charter says they need to make recommendations, be it for or against any action. Jim said if they feel they are unqualified to develop a program, they can seek consultation and/or additional time. Ellen does not want the DMC to be deemed ineffective.

- Members took a vote: Should the DMC develop the Deer Management Program? YES

Bob pointed out that the educational material they have is very comprehensive and they shouldn't be looking to reinvent the wheel. Members agreed. Mark said the BOS may be open to another aerial survey in two years when technology is better and the cost comes down. He suggested compiling a large list of resources for private landowners. The 4-Post Feeder is still a question of liability at this point. Members agreed that a short-term list of resources was prudent and a determination about the need for a hunt could be better made two years out. Walt said this would give time for neighboring townships to adopt similar programs.

Jim said they need to make a recommendation by June. Ellen and Maria will work together to pull information from the Ridgefield Report for their draft.

6. REFLECTORS

No one investigated the Strieter-Lite road reflectors. Ellen thinks money could be available from the federal government for these. Jim said he has read mixed reviews. The manufacturer is currently looking into redesigning them. They are approximately \$500/each and are usually placed 30-50 yards apart. Jim suggested a pilot study on a stretch of road in the township if they wanted to pursue it. They need to consider installation and maintenance costs as well.

7. OTHER:

Maria broke down the numbers obtained from the PA Game Commission on deer pick-up in Chester County in 2006. Of the 2153 deer, she estimates that only 57 deer were picked up in East Goshen. Of the 18,000 accidents reported by State Farms, she estimates that only 4 accidents occurred in East Goshen (dividing the state by the number of counties and the county by the number of townships). She doesn't think these numbers will stand up to residents.

Steve pointed out that he knows of a hunt that occurred this fall on 200 acres southwest of Reservoir Rd. in Westtown that removed 45 deer at a cost of \$45,000.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 21st. Additional meetings are scheduled for June 4th and June 18th.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

Harold Chalfant, 1352 Paoli Pike – agreed that there is a problem with lyme disease and accidents but he hasn't seen as many deer in the park while driving at night the last 6 months, suggesting that sometimes nature takes care of itself. Also, he heard that shooting deer can actually speed up reproduction rates. Al said different parts of Edgemont and Ridley used to be the same way and sometimes deer just get spooked. Steve asked if he had any substantiating information.

Paul Kogut, 215 N. Lochwood Ln. – said it seemed to be a subjective issue and believes the safety of hunting in narrow areas is the real concern.

Elizabeth Anderson, 1607 Margo Ln. – said she gave information on David Canter to Ellen at the last meeting and suggested having him as a guest speaker. Jim said are looking into having him speak at the May 21st meeting.

Sue Berhard, 220 Lochwood Ln. – thanked the DMC members for time and research on the subject; she does appreciate their hard work.

Marsha Gordon, 3008 Valley Drive – suggested that the educational materials include information on the permethrin cotton tubes for the residents.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Al made a motion to adjourn. Steve seconded the motion. There was no further discussion or public comment. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.

Respectfully submitted by: _____

Tracie Hill, Recording Secretary