



**Wildlife Management Association  
The Ranches At Blackbuck Ridge**

# White-tail Deer Management Plan

Established October 2025

The goal of this plan is to provide a framework for managing a healthy, balanced population of whitetail deer within our growing community. As development continues and more residents call this area home, we must remain committed to protecting native wildlife and fostering a sustainable relationship between humans and nature.

When considering the management of white-tail deer in our community, we must acknowledge the **past**, **present**, and **future**.

## **PAST**

Historically, the whitetail deer population in our region coexisted naturally with the rural landscape. Large ranches provided expansive areas for deer to roam freely. The environment was largely unmanaged and governed by natural factors—predation, drought, wildfire, and disease—all of which helped regulate deer populations.

## **PRESENT**

Today, the situation has changed dramatically. The influx of new residents and development has transformed vast ranchlands into residential communities like ours. Our 1,668-acre property once supported only 1–2 families; now it may support up to 200. This increased human presence has significantly reduced wildlife habitat.

At the same time, natural population controls such as predators are almost nonexistent. Deer are no longer pressured to move and now remain within the community year-round. Additionally, residents have often provided supplemental feed—corn, protein, minerals—which encourages unnatural concentrations of deer and promotes rapid population growth.

The result: **we are currently experiencing overpopulation.**

## **FUTURE**

If common-sense, science-based management practices are not implemented soon, our deer population will continue to grow unsustainably. This will lead to:

- Overcrowding and habitat degradation.
- Increased spread of disease
- Declining herd health
- Property damage (e.g., landscaping, gardens)
- Increased deer-vehicle collisions
- Negative shifts in resident perception of deer (from admiration to nuisance)

Communities around us are already facing these problems after delaying action.

<https://www.lakeway-tx.gov/1916/Feeding-the-Deer---PLEASE-DONT>

<https://newbraunfels.gov/2303/Wildlife-Feeding-Prohibition?PREVIEW=YES>

<https://www.horseshoe-bay-tx.gov/451/Deer-Management-Program>

<https://www.graniteshoals.org/235/Deer-Harvesting-Program-2025>

<https://www.cottonwoodshores.org/deer-wildlife-feeding-regulations-approved-by-city-council/>

We have the opportunity to avoid those mistakes.

## THE BASICS

Biological carrying capacity is defined as the maximum number of individuals that a given environment can support without detrimental effects. Micro-habitat and fluctuating environmental conditions may cause the carrying capacity to vary, and our Burnet County biologist from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) assists us in adjusting our plan according to these variances. The biologist has recommended a current carrying capacity of 1 deer per 10-12 acres within The Ranches of Blackbuck Ridge (RBR.)

Within RBR, we must consider not only native deer, but also exotic blackbuck antelope when evaluating the population that the land can sustainably support. Managing the population of white-tailed deer and other ungulates at or below the carrying capacity of the range is essential in providing quality wildlife habitat for a multitude of wildlife species.

## CENSUS & DATA COLLECTION

The first step in responsible management is data collection. Over the past several years, we have conducted multiple deer counts. We have engaged experts, and as we learn more, we have refined our methods. Our current methods of data collection include:

- Site visits from TPWD and our private wildlife consultant for observations of our land and habitat features.
- Spring fawn count with the help of community volunteers
- Deer observations Aug 1 – Oct 1 with the help of community volunteers
- Annual fall survey compliant with TPWD guidance
- Harvest and loss reporting: we encourage property owners to use our anonymous reporting form located on our website: [Wildlife Harvesting and Loss Report – The Ranches at Blackbuck Ridge Wildlife Management Association](#)

Based upon current data, our experts agree: ***We are overpopulated.***

### Deer Density:

TPWD Recommended  
1 deer per 10–12 acres

RBR Current  
~1 deer per 3.5 acres

### Buck-to-Doe Ratio:

TPWD Recommended  
1 buck per 1–2 does

RBR Current  
~1 buck per 6-7 does

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

### 1. Supplemental Feeding

While well-intentioned, supplemental feeding is contributing to overpopulation and disease risk.

- **Corn:** Offers minimal nutrition; should only be used during hunting season for baiting in conjunction with a detailed harvesting plan.
- **Protein:** May be used **sparingly** in **spring** to support fawn-rearing and antler growth, minimum 15% crude protein recommended.
- **Mineral Blocks: Not recommended.**
- **Alfalfa:** Only in cases of **extreme environmental stress** (e.g., hard winter freezes).

The healthiest deer rely on **native forage**. In general, supplemental feeding is discouraged. Over-reliance on feeders leads to unnatural congregations, habitat destruction, and disease transmission.

## 2. Habitat Management

Native vegetation needs time and space to regrow. Habitat cannot recover unless the deer population is reduced.

Experts have observed habitat degradation in RBR, including:

- Over-browsed vegetation
- Lack of regrowth or new plant generation
- Visible "browse lines" throughout the landscape

Responsible habitat management will be dependent upon reducing our deer population.

## 3. Harvesting (Population Reduction)

- **RBR Target Population:** 150–180 deer
- **Current Population Estimate:** 450
- **2025 Fawn Reports:** 55 fawns reported on just 12% of properties
- If scaled, the population could **increase by 25% annually**—this is **not sustainable**.

While sensitive for some, harvesting is the **most humane and effective** method to control deer numbers.

### Harvest Recommendations:

- Focus on **does**. If you wish to harvest a buck, please consider harvesting a doe **first**.
- All harvested meat can be used or distributed within the community—we will help coordinate this.
- Harvest at least **the number of fawns born annually** to maintain current levels, and **more** to reduce overpopulation.

## CLOSING STATEMENT

This is the first edition of our Whitetail Deer Management Plan. It provides a framework that will evolve as we continue to gather new data and respond to changing conditions.

### Key Takeaways:

- We are overpopulated with white-tail deer.
- Supplemental feeding in the community should be drastically reduced or eliminated.
- Habitat is declining due to over-browsing.
- Responsible deer harvesting is necessary and supported.

Thank you for your commitment to ethical wildlife stewardship and the long-term health of our land.