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# Bloomington/Monroe County Deer Task Force: Please don't feed the deer

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H-T Report

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The Bloomington/Monroe County Deer Task Force asks local residents not to feed deer.

The group was appointed to study deer overpopulation issues in the area with an eye to recommending a solution to the problem.

Now, the group has issued a press release asking local residents not to feed the deer.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources advises that deer in Monroe County are not starving and that local winters are not severe enough to warrant supplemental feeding, the statement says.

If a resident sees a deer with its ribs showing, it is most likely a doe nursing her young in the spring and summer. Such weight loss is normal and temporary.

“Supplemental feeding is actually not in the best interest of the deer,” the statement says.

Here's why:

- Deer feeding sites may increase deer-vehicle collisions. Most deer feeding is conducted near homes, which places deer in close proximity to well-traveled roads.
- Concentrating deer and increasing nose-to-nose contact around a food source can increase the rate of the spread of disease.
- Deer are browsers and will heavily graze areas surrounding feeding stations. A resident who feeds deer in an urban setting may cause increased landscape damage for neighbors.
- Deer using a feeding site can become acclimated to, and no longer fearful of, humans. A fear of humans is in the best interest of deer. Increased acclimation will create more conflict between humans and deer and between humans and other humans.
- When placing feed on the ground for deer, residents will likely attract other wildlife, such as raccoons and mice. White-footed mice are reservoirs of Lyme disease.

In the winter, deer typically eat and move less to conserve energy. Feeding sites may cause deer to travel further to reach the site than they would for natural forage. Feeding sites situated in residential areas mean that deer are more likely to be chased by neighborhood dogs. Even if they are not injured, provoking a deer to run through deep snow and frigid temperatures causes them to waste a lot of energy they cannot afford to lose.

While feeding the deer might seem like a compassionate thing to do, the dietary needs of local white-tailed deer are best met by native forage, the news release says. The kindest thing residents can do is to let deer fend for themselves.

For more information on deer and the deer task force, visit: [www.bloomington.in.gov/deertaskforce](http://www.bloomington.in.gov/deertaskforce).



Deer graze in a yard along Hillside Drive in this 2010 file photo. David Snodgrass | Herald-Times

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