

**Deer Management Final Report**  
**2023 - 2024**  
**March 29, 2024**



In 2023, Meridian Township conducted their 13<sup>th</sup> year of the Deer Management Archery Program. The archery portion of the program operates annually from October 1-January 1. The Meridian Police cull was developed in 2020 and added to the management program in January of 2021. A walk in cooler was purchased the same year for the purpose of donating harvested venison to local food banks. These additions came from approved funding by the board and for the last four years has contributed to the overall success of management objectives.

The Township Board initiated this program in 2010 in response to the continued high number of car-deer collisions and concerns with ongoing destruction of vegetation in parks, land preserves and in residential neighborhoods. Deer management is also imperative to mitigate the return of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), which plagued the deer herd in 2015. The reported car/deer accidents have decreased over a thirteen year period of 36%, ([2011] 152/97 [2023]) with 2023 reporting the least accidents at 97.

Stewardship staff and volunteers have reported a noticeable reduction in deer browsing damage in parks and preserves included in management areas. CWD has not been reported since 2016, which indicates the white-tailed deer population is healthy enough to combat the disease. Due to the absence of CWD and funding from Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger (MSAH), venison from the program is donated to 15 local food banks. Locally harvested venison is providing a sustainable, local, and healthy source of protein to community members.

New to the 2023 Deer Management season is a collaboration between the Township and the Michigan State University (MSU) Fisheries and Wildlife Department. MSU researchers have partnered with Meridian Township to conduct a study on tick-borne disease in white-tailed deer and their relative home ranges. This study seeks to understand more about tick-borne disease distribution and possible reduction techniques within white-tailed deer populations.

The continued success of this program is a direct result of effective collaborative efforts with the Township Board, Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Police, together with volunteer archery hunters, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division (MDNR), Michigan State University's Fisheries and Wildlife Department, and the Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger Organization. **The culmination of efforts from these entities resulted in 300 deer harvested and 6,156 pounds of venison donated to 16 local food banks for the 2023-2024 management year.**

**Program Overview: Archery Program**

1. The Meridian Township Deer Management Program is highly managed and follows all Michigan Department of Natural Resources rules and guidelines in conducting this program.
2. All volunteer hunters must be residents of Meridian Township, submit to a criminal background check, pass an archery proficiency test, and attend the mandatory training meeting.

3. Parks and Recreation staff provides clear, consistent communication and enforcement of program rules and guidelines throughout the season and communicates daily with program participants.
4. All parks and land preserves remained open to the public during the archery season.
5. DPW staff member, Mike Ellis led and managed the cooler's maintenance as well as conducted venison deliveries four times per week to the processor in Carson City.

### **Program Overview: Police Cull**

1. A Damage and Nuisance Animal Control Permit was obtained from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The permit allowed the Police Department to cull 200 deer.
2. The Police Department utilized infrared technology, cameras, thermal imaging and suppressors to conduct the cull.
3. The Police Cull operated during the evening hours once parks and land preserves were closed.
4. No overtime pay was paid to the officers participating in the program.
  - Four DPW staff worked early morning hours, following the evening cull to field dress the deer before delivering them to the processor.

In addition Mike Ellis contacted and nurtured outstanding relationships with 16 local food banks where he distributed a total of 6,156 pounds of venison throughout both the archery and extended cull seasons. All donated venison went through testing for metal particles and CWD per mandatory MDNR testing. MSAH covered all processing costs for 221 donated deer, totaling a cost of \$23,205 for the 2023-2024 season

### **Program Statistics:**

#### **2023 Volunteer Archery Deer Management Program**

- Conducted under the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Deer Management Assistance Permit, during the regular archery season of October 1st 2024 - January 1st 2024.
- 67 resident volunteer archers participated.
- **141** Deer Harvested from 43 Township properties and 34 private properties (*see figure 1 at end of report*). 77 deer were donated.
- Estimated **3,436.5 volunteer hours** served in the field

#### **2024 Police Cull**

- Conducted under a Damage and Nuisance Animal Control Permit from the Wildlife Division of the MDNR: January 2, 2024 – January 13, 2024
- Cull is implemented by pre-selected and specially trained Meridian Township police officers.
- Management areas were chosen based on intersections of high density deer-car collisions according to Michigan State Police reports for Meridian Township.
- **159** deer culled and donated for the 2024 season.

**Total Deer Harvested- 300**

**Total Donation to Local Food Banks - A total of 6,156 pounds of venison were donated to the following local Food Banks:**

- *Okemos Community Church*
- *Haslett Community Church*
- *Community Baptist Church of Lansing*
- *Dansville Clothing & Food Bank*
- *St. Jude Catholic Church of Dewitt*
- *Community Baptist Church of Grand Ledge*
- *Santa's First Responders Holiday Party*
- *First Presbyterian Church*
- *St. John's Church of Christ*
- *Haslett Food Bank*
- *Lakeside Chapel of Park Lake*
- *Lansing City Rescue Mission*
- *Our Savior Lutheran Food Bank*
- *Williamston Food Bank*
- *Leslie Community Outreach*
- *Mason Food Bank*

Table 1. Meridian Deer Management program numbers since 2011

	<b>Total Hunters</b>	<b>Properties Hunted</b>	<b>Archery Harvest</b>	<b>Police Cull</b>	<b>Reported Deer/Car Collisions</b>	<b>Dead Deer Pickup</b>
<b>2011</b>	25	7	43	--	152	--
<b>2012</b>	50	18	90	--	153	--
<b>2013</b>	60	20	127	--	180	--
<b>2014</b>	73	21	150	--	137	--
<b>2015</b>	30	19	63	--	144	--
<b>2016</b>	73	31	73	--	164	--
<b>2017</b>	66	30	80	--	129	--
<b>2018</b>	74	38	57	--	129	--
<b>2019</b>	84	38	88	--	153	--
<b>2020</b>	75	42	176	150 (21')	100	46
<b>2021</b>	68	43	130	200 (22')	116	85
<b>2022</b>	70	63	156	200 (23')	103	134
<b>2023</b>	67	71	141	159 (24')	97	133

**Summary:**

Meridian Township's Deer Management Plan strives to focus on an ecosystems approach by creating co-existence among wildlife, citizens and our suburban/natural communities in a safe and efficient manner. Education and outreach to utilize native plants in landscaping is of utmost importance to this mission. A recent collaboration in 2023 with the Michigan State University Fisheries and Wildlife Department to study deer home ranges and tick-borne diseases within the deer population provides more insight into the ecology of Meridian's white-tailed deer herd. The deer management plan recognizes that the use and enjoyment of deer by residents is highly variable. Selection of deer management methods requires consideration of general concepts and location-specific deer dynamics.

Meridian Township takes their role as an environmental steward seriously and as such, recognizes the need to implement science-based management of our fragile natural resources so that they may remain in perpetuity for future generations.

**Figures for 2023 Season:**

*Figure 1: Total number of deer harvested at a property level. Only includes properties with >1 harvest.*

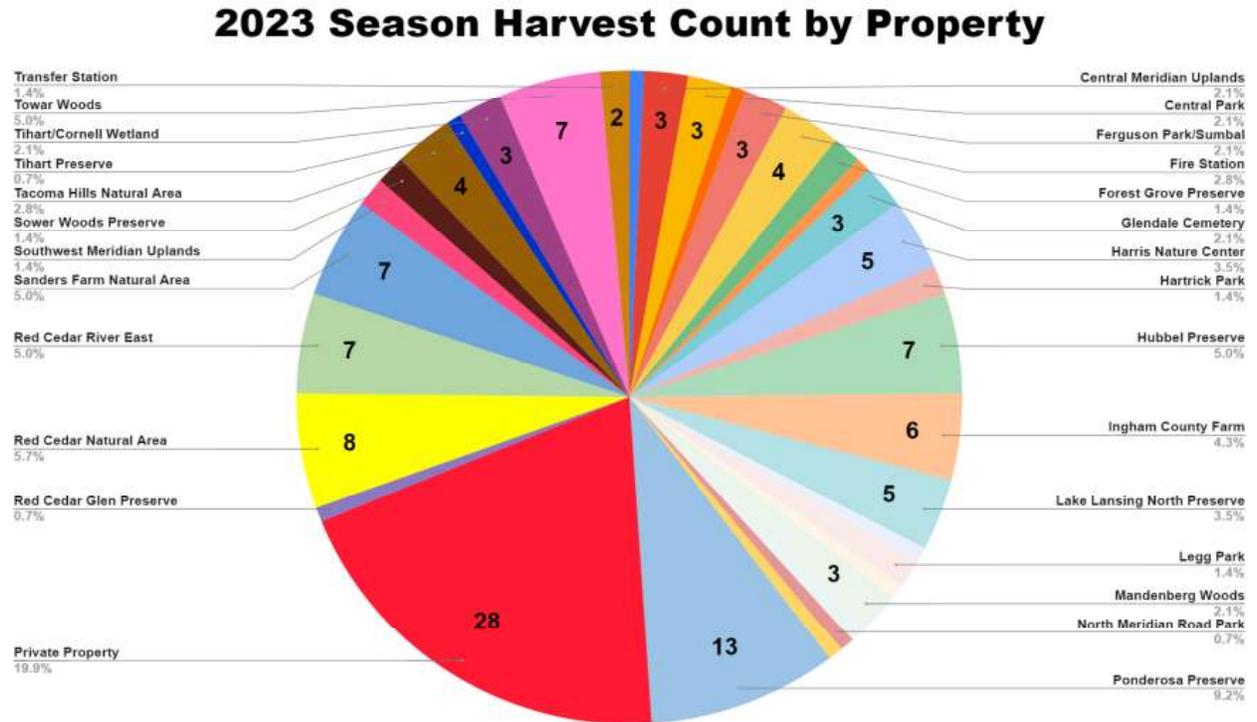


Figure 2: Deer vehicle collisions reported to the township police department annually from 2011-2023.

