

~~the fines for trespassing while deer hunting on any day; repealing certain provisions of law regarding hunting on private property and hunting in certain counties; requiring the Department annually to report and make recommendations on or before a certain date to certain committees of the General Assembly regarding certain aspects of its deer management plans; defining certain terms declaring the intent of the General Assembly; making certain technical corrections and stylistic changes; and generally relating to Sunday deer hunting in certain areas of the State.~~

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Natural Resources

Section 10-405(a), 10-410(a), 10-411, and 10-415

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2000 Replacement Volume and 2002 Supplement)

Preamble

WHEREAS, The current population of deer in the State of Maryland, which is estimated at more than 250,000, is far beyond what the available habitat can accommodate; and

WHEREAS, Despite the disruption of rural habitat areas because of development projects and recreational uses, deer are remarkably adaptable to residential areas, including urban and suburban sprawl areas, where they enjoy safety from natural predators and hunters; and

WHEREAS, As demonstrated by a 1998-1999 survey of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties in which the number of deer in the areas studied increased by approximately 50% in the course of only 1 year, this population is not only thriving but reproducing at a startling rate; and

WHEREAS, When a deer herd reaches its upper density limits, as is now the case, the results are the poor health and weakened physical condition of the animals themselves, as well as their overconsumption of native plants, shrubs, and trees that are necessary for the survival of other species in the natural ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, In tandem with this multiplication of the deer population have been alarming spikes in the rate of tick-borne illnesses transmitted to human beings, such as Lyme disease; and

WHEREAS, The rate of reported deer-vehicle collisions has more than doubled in the State since 1990, and these collisions have caused multiple fatalities and serious injuries; and

WHEREAS, Deer-vehicle collisions likewise cause property damage of about \$10 million per year, which, in turn, leads to higher insurance rates for all drivers; and

WHEREAS, A recent University of Maryland study found that, because of deer, 92% of the State's farmers suffer damage to corn, wheat, and soybean crops, an