The Deer Problem in Lakewood

White-tailed deer have become a frequent sight in Lakewood. While these graceful creatures are a delight to watch, the abundance of deer has become overwhelming. Even though the deer have eaten many of our flowers, shrubs, and trees, they are obviously malnourished.

Overpopulation leads to many collisions of deer and vehicles. Deer also carry ticks that spread Lyme disease, which can be fatal to humans. In the suburbs of New York City and Boston, the number of cases of Lyme disease has risen dramatically since 1998, the result of an out-of-control deer population. The disease has spread throughout the Midwest, including our community.

Other communities overrun with deer have tried to find solutions short of killing the deer. Trapping and relocating deer seems like an obvious alternative, but the solution is costly, and most deer die during the process or shortly after they are relocated to new places.

Wild animal contraceptives have been tried in Ohio and Kentucky, but without success. Deer learn to avoid the bait that carries the contraceptive, and high doses are required for the contraceptive to be effective. Deer herds are now so large that it is extremely difficult to vaccinate most of a herd. Longer hunting seasons can reduce the number of deer in rural areas, but hunting deer is not possible when they give birth and raise their young in the front yards of our houses.

No management plan will work until the deer population is brought down to sustainable limits. We have no options for relocating deer. Consequently, trapping deer with immediate euthanasia is the only practical solution. Allowing deer to die of starvation or as road kill denies our responsibility. We have no ethical choice but to manage the deer population until we can find a nonlethal means to control their explosive birth rate.

Ragged right text produces a sloppy edge around photograph.

Image of deer quite appealing. Does not convey the correct message for this article.