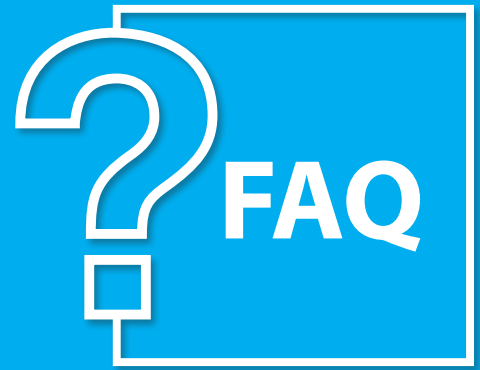


Deer Population Management Independence Oaks County Park February and March 2026



Based on success at two parks, Oakland County Parks will institute a firearms hunting program for deer population management over three nights in February and March 2026.

Summary:

- Firearms will be used by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services employees.
- Hunting will take place after dark so the park will remain open during normal hours.
- Park access is not permitted after sunset.
- All meat will be donated to the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger program.

Reasons for Deer Management:

- Deer populations are higher than historically normal due to lack of predators and fewer hunters. Population surveys at Independence Oaks show densities of nearly 40 deer per square mile. Normal density should be about or below 10-20 deer per square mile.
- Overbrowsing is causing significant natural habitat damage. Wildflowers, rare plants and tree seedlings are all negatively impacted, as are the animals that rely on them.
- Individual deer health suffers when populations are higher.
- Oakland County has the highest, or second highest, number of car-deer accidents in Michigan each year.

Changes to the program:

- USDA Wildlife Services is partnering with Oakland County Parks to remove deer using firearms.
- This continues the managed firearms hunts the park has held since 2003. Volunteer hunters are not being solicited due to the following reasons:
 - The volunteer program is difficult to continue under the current Michigan Department of Natural Resources bait ban.
 - The program required closing the park up to six days a year.
 - Scheduling set hunt dates/closures in advance often resulted in low deer reduction numbers due to inclement weather.
 - Preparation and implementation used significant park staff time.

Emphasis on safety:

- USDA Wildlife Services uses highly trained employees with a focus on safety and ethics.
- USDA staff will not take shots unless they are certain it is safe to do so.
- The program will be coordinated with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office and Conservation Officers.

Contact for questions or comments:

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