

SCA August 2011 Newsletter

Sugarloaf Country and Deer Donation Program

At the July meeting of the Montgomery County Agriculture Advisory Committee, Jeremy Criss advised those in attendance that property damage attributable to collisions with deer in the U.S. (Top Ten States) is close to four billion dollars. This data represents property damage, and doesn't include loss of life. The State of Pennsylvania has the highest rate of deer collisions, reporting over 100,000 collisions a year. The State of Maryland is ranked in the 11th or 12th position with total collisions reported 31,888 and property damage totaling almost \$99 million. These figures are based on reported collisions so when you see deer lying dead on the road for days on end this represents unreported collisions and therefore the actual number of collisions is much higher. We all know just by driving around our roads that deer collisions represent a very serious and dangerous situation. Additionally, it is estimated that one deer can consume up to 2,000 pounds of grain each year and this outcome negatively impacts our Montgomery County farmers' and the grain-crop yields caused by the deer population annually.

In response to a 2004 landowner survey which revealed the enormity of the problems associated with increasing white tailed deer population, Montgomery County launched the Deer Donation Program as part of an overall deer management plan. This program encourages farmers and hunters to harvest more deer in a responsible manner by providing local deer collection sites in Poolesville and Laytonsville. This program has been a great success, providing over 49,000 pounds of venison to local food banks. The program "is administered in partnership with William F. Willard Farm, LLC and Patriot Wildlife Management Services, to coordinate the collection, transportation, processing, and donation of venison to local area food banks." For more information on the Deer Donation Program, go to the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development – Agricultural Services website by clicking [here](#).

Why are we devoting our monthly newsletter to share this news with you? The program has been a huge success, but it is currently limited to a County budget of \$20,000 dollars. During the 2010-2011 firearms season the Deer Donation Program used all of the public funding and the deer donations kept coming in due to a deer donation contest sponsored and funded in the amount of \$1,000 by the Montgomery County Farm Bureau to provide 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place cash awards to the hunters/farmers that donated the most deer. The success of the deer donation contest resulted in private funding being provided in the amount of \$5,000 from the Montgomery County Farm Bureau, the Montgomery County Extension Advisory Council and the Green Industry Association of MC to help cover the costs of the program through March 2011. The Deer Donation Program could expand even further with the help of other private donations. The Agricultural Services Division is currently reaching out to the Automobile Insurance Companies to educate them on the benefits of reducing the deer population and soliciting funding to help. Individuals and groups can help protect farmers' crops as well as promote a healthy forest understory. This is a great opportunity for all of us to help our community food banks and our local farmers, to make our roads safer, and to preserve open spaces and forests.

Please consider supporting the Montgomery County Deer Donation Program with your tax deductible donation made out to:

Montgomery County Extension Advisory Council MC-EAC
c/o Chuck Schuster
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, Maryland 20855.

Mark your calendars— Sugarloaf Citizens Association Pot Luck in the Barn - Sunday, October 23, 2011.