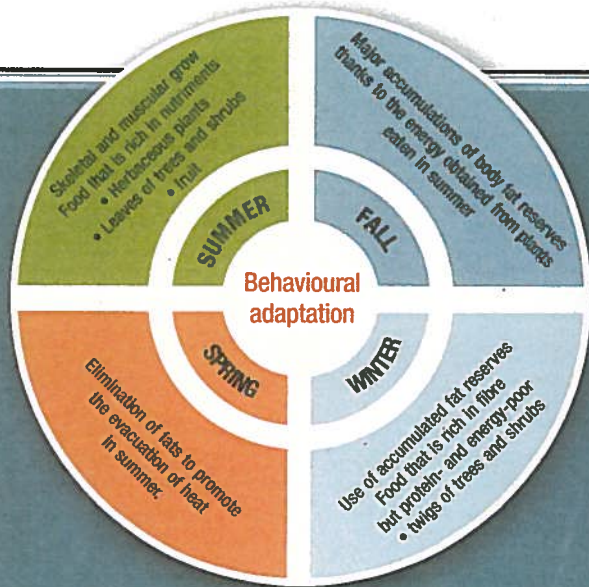


ADAPTATION OF DEER OVER THE SEASONS

Deer are able to thrive in our climate thanks to two important adaptations, one physiological and the other behavioural. From a behavioural standpoint, deer leave their summer habitats with the arrival of the first major snowfalls in order to congregate in yards where the soft-wood tree cover, the slopes and the exposure limit snow accumulations. Deer reduce their level of activity (including feeding) and maintain a network of trails which provide access to stands containing food and offer a means of escape from predators.



RECOMMENDATIONS

While artificial feeding for recreational purposes is not recommended, the MRNF has come up with a few recommendations for those individuals who insist on continuing this practice:

- Prefer maple or cedar branches over artificial food;
- Disperse the branches at several locations over the site to promote a greater dispersion of deer;
- Choose a site located far away from roads and homes.

AN ADAPTED MANAGEMENT OF POPULATIONS

Québec's white-tailed deer population is in excellent condition, and it is important to respect this animal's habits. Specialists from the MRNF monitor deer populations in Québec and adjust harvesting levels by taking into account natural mortality factors such as the harshness of winter.

The white-tailed deer is a wild animal that is part of Québec's natural heritage. All citizens share the responsibility of keeping this animal population in good health. This includes not feeding deer in an unsuitable manner and not luring them outside of their natural habitat.

WINTER FEEDING WHITE-TAILED DEER:

consequences for this species and for citizens

FOR INFORMATION:

www.mrnf.gouv.qc.ca
 Service à la clientèle : 1 866 248-6936
 Québec City and the surrounding area: 418 627-8600
 Regional offices and local wildlife protection offices in Québec

In case of emergency, SOS poaching:
 1 800 463-2191



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Ressources naturelles
 et Faune

Québec



Fédération québécoise
 des chasseurs et pêcheurs

Québec



It is not uncommon to observe white-tailed deer in rural and peri-urban areas. Several well-meaning individuals, concerned about the welfare of deer or simply wishing to be able to observe them better, have grown accustomed to feeding this species in winter.

Feeding is generally detrimental to the health of deer and may have numerous negative consequences:

- Diseases and death resulting from the consumption of inappropriate food.
- Transmission of diseases and parasites at the feeding site: ingestion of food contaminated by saliva, urine and excrements.
- Poaching: feeding facilitates the killing of deer out of season at a short distance using small-calibre firearms.
- Domestication of deer (they lose their fear of and become dependent on humans for food).
- Abandoning of seasonal migratory behaviour.
- Presence of deer in environments that are less conducive to their survival, namely outside yards.
- Traffic accidents involving deer when feeding sites are located near roads.



While it may be pleasant to be able to observe deer nearby, a concentration of animals on the same site results in high browsing pressure, which may lead to a deterioration and over-use of the habitats.



Winter feeding may result in a greater presence of deer and other animals (raccoons, skunks, squirrels and bears), which often cause damage to private property close to feeding sites (ornamental trees, crops, planted areas, etc.).

The Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune (MRNF) is concerned about the state of deer populations and takes the necessary actions at the appropriate time. Feeding programs are exceptional measures, which are ordered and coordinated by the MRNF.

HEALTH OF DEER

A deer's digestive system is adapted to nutrient-poor food in winter. Overly rich food can result in this animal's death. Here are a few examples of foodstuffs that should be avoided:

- Feed intended for livestock contains too much protein (approximately 16%) and excess protein is excreted in the urine. This additional loss of water must be offset by eating snow. Since deer expend a great deal of energy converting this snow into water at body temperature, the net energy gain is very limited.
- Fruit and some vegetables as well as table scraps provide a small energy intake for deer and may cause diarrhea and bloating of the rumen. The water content of these foodstuffs is often very high, and deer must expend high levels of energy to warm up this food. It would be like a person eating "Popsicles" for food during a winter outing!
- In the case of bread, even dry, a deer uses up more energy digesting the bread than it derives from eating this type of food.
- Pure grains (including corn) are rich in energy but contain few fibres, which may lead to an inflammation of the rumen (acute remunitis), a disease that is occasionally fatal in deer.

