

Deer Management Final Report
2025 - 2026
January 27th 2026 (Updated March 2026)



In 2025, Meridian Township conducted their 15th year of the Deer Management Archery Program. The archery portion of the program operates annually from October 1-January 1. The Meridian Police cull was developed in 2020 and added to the management program in January of 2021 and occurs annually after the conclusion of the archery program, if management requires it. Harvested venison is then tested, processed, and donated to food banks locally in Meridian Township and the Greater Lansing Area. These additions to the program have contributed to the overall success of management objectives while also providing local distributors and residents with a valuable source of nutritious food.

Deer-Car Collisions

The Township Board initiated this program in 2010 in response to the continued high number of car-deer collisions and concerns with ongoing destruction of vegetation in parks, land preserves and in residential neighborhoods. Local deer management is also imperative to mitigate Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) at the state level, which plagued the deer herd within the township in 2015 and once again in 2025. The reported car/deer collisions have fluctuated on a downward trend since the addition of the police cull, showing a 49% decrease between the years of 2011 and 2024. In 2025 numbers of collisions increased significantly with reports showing 151 deer car collisions in the township. This increase from 2024 could be due to factors, such as new housing developments and construction in areas of the Township where deer have historically been observed and are now displaced. A majority of the collisions occurred along Grand River Avenue and Jolly Road.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Due to the absence of CWD since 2016 and funding from Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), venison from the program is donated to 8 local food banks. This year, CWD was found by the MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory from 2 deer harvested within the township, indicating that the population is experiencing a resurgence of the disease. Recent reports from the MDNR have shown CWD has been identified in nearby counties in Central and Southern Michigan. To date 376 wild deer in Michigan have tested positive for CWD out of 148,000 tested total. According to these numbers there is a 0.25% known occurrence of CWD from this tested population. The 2 positive cases in the township's herd caused a temporary pause in donations until DNR clearance and all other harvests tested negative for the disease. Locally harvested venison provides a sustainable, local, and healthy source of protein to community members. Since 2020 over 40,000 pounds of venison has been donated through this management program. Stewardship staff and volunteers have reported a noticeable reduction in deer browsing damage in parks and preserves included in management areas.

Research Collaboration with Michigan State University

2025 marked the third year of collaboration between Meridian Township and the Michigan State University (MSU) Fisheries and Wildlife Department. MSU researchers have partnered with Meridian Township to conduct a study on tick-borne disease in white-tailed deer and their relative

home ranges. This study seeks to understand more about tick-borne disease distribution and possible reduction techniques within white-tailed deer populations. Research on age structure and fawn mortality have been added to the study. All information is provided to Meridian Township and aids staff in assessing urban deer management decisions and strategies. The continued success of this program is a direct result of effective collaborative efforts with the Township Board, Departments of Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Police, together with volunteer archery hunters, the MDNR, and MSU's Fisheries and Wildlife Department. **The culmination of efforts from these entities resulted in 254 deer harvested and so far an estimated 5482 pounds of venison donated to 12 local food banks for the 2025-2026 management year.**

Program Overview: Archery Program

1. The Meridian Township Deer Management Program is highly managed and follows all MDNR rules and guidelines in conducting this program. The archery program utilizes Deer Management Assistance Permits (DMAPs), permitted from the MDNR.
2. All volunteer hunters must be residents of Meridian Township, submit to a police background check, pass an archery proficiency test, and attend the mandatory training meeting.
3. Parks and Recreation staff provides clear, consistent communication and enforcement of program rules and guidelines throughout the season and communicates daily with program participants.
4. All parks and land preserves remained open to the public during the archery season. Volunteer archers are mandated to check-in and out every time they enter and exit property during the archery season.
5. DPW staff member, Mike Ellis leads and manages the cooler's maintenance as well as conducts venison deliveries four times per week to the approved processor in Carson City.

Program Overview: Police Cull

1. Damage and Nuisance Animal Control Permits are utilized for this program, permitted from the MDNR.
2. The Police Department utilizes infrared technology, cameras, thermal imaging and suppressors to conduct the cull.
3. The Police Cull operated during the evening hours once parks and land preserves are closed.
4. No overtime pay was paid to the officers participating in the program.
 - Four DPW staff worked early morning hours, following the evening cull to field dress the deer before delivering them to the processor.

In addition Mike Ellis contacted and nurtured outstanding relationships with up to 15 local food banks where he continues to distribute an estimated 5,482 pounds of venison throughout both the archery and extended cull seasons. All donated venison went through testing for CWD per MDNR donation mandates. Non-toxic ammunition was implemented for use this year during the police cull.

Program Statistics:

2025 Volunteer Archery Deer Management Program

- Conducted under the MDNR, Deer Management Assistance Permit, during the regular archery season of October 1st 2025 - January 1st 2026.
- 61 resident volunteer archers participated.
- **121** Deer Harvested from 43 Township properties and 23 private properties. The sex ratio was 63% does, 38% males harvested.
- Estimated **3,467 volunteer hours** served in the field
- **Venison donation: 1,381 pounds**

2026 Police Cull

- Conducted under a Damage and Nuisance Animal Control Permit from the Wildlife Division of the MDNR: January 5, 2026 – January 29, 2026
- Cull is implemented by pre-selected and specially trained Meridian Township police officers. Management areas were chosen based on intersections of high density deer-car collisions according to Michigan State Police reports for Meridian Township.
- **124** deer harvested and donated for the 2026 season. The sex ratio was 51% does, 49% males harvested.
- **Venison donation: 4,101 pounds**

Total Deer Harvested– 245

Total Donation to Local Food Banks – 5,482 pounds of venison (21,928 meals) was donated to the following local Food Banks in 2025:

- *Carson City Community Food Bank*
- *Lakeside Chapel of Park Lake*
- *Okemos Community Church*
- *Santa's First Responders Event*
- *Williamston Food Bank*
- *Leslie Community Outreach*
- *First Presbyterian Church*
- *Haslett Community Church*
- *Community Baptist Church*
- *Mason Food Bank*
- *Dansville Food Bank*
- *The Nest (Lansing)*
- *Catholic Community Church of St. Jude*

*A summary of Meridian Township program numbers is presented on the next page.

	Total Hunters	Properties Hunted	Archery Harvest	Police Cull	Reported Deer/Car Collisions	Dead Deer Pickup
2011	25	7	43	--	152	--
2012	50	18	90	--	153	--
2013	60	20	127	--	180	--
2014	73	21	150	--	137	--
2015	30	19	63	--	144	--
2016	73	31	73	--	164	--
2017	66	30	80	--	129	--
2018	74	38	57	--	129	--
2019	84	38	88	--	153	--
2020	75	42	176	150 (21')	100	46
2021	68	43	130	200 (22')	116	85
2022	70	63	156	200 (23')	103	134
2023	67	71	141	159 (24')	97	133
2024	67	74	147	153 (25')	77	131
2025	61	74	121	124	151	146

Table 1. Meridian Deer Management program numbers since 2011

Summary:

Meridian Township's Deer Management Plan strives to focus on an ecosystems approach by creating co-existence among wildlife, citizens and our suburban/natural communities in a safe and efficient manner. Education and outreach to utilize native plants in landscaping is of utmost importance to this mission. A recent collaboration in 2023 with the Michigan State University Fisheries and Wildlife Department to study deer home ranges and tick-borne diseases within the deer population provides more insight into the ecology of Meridian's white-tailed deer herd. The deer management plan recognizes that the use and enjoyment of deer by residents is highly variable. Selection of deer management methods requires consideration of general concepts and location-specific deer dynamics.

Meridian Township takes their role as an environmental steward seriously and as such, recognizes the need to implement science-based management of our fragile natural resources so that they may remain in perpetuity for future generations.

Figures for 2025 Season:

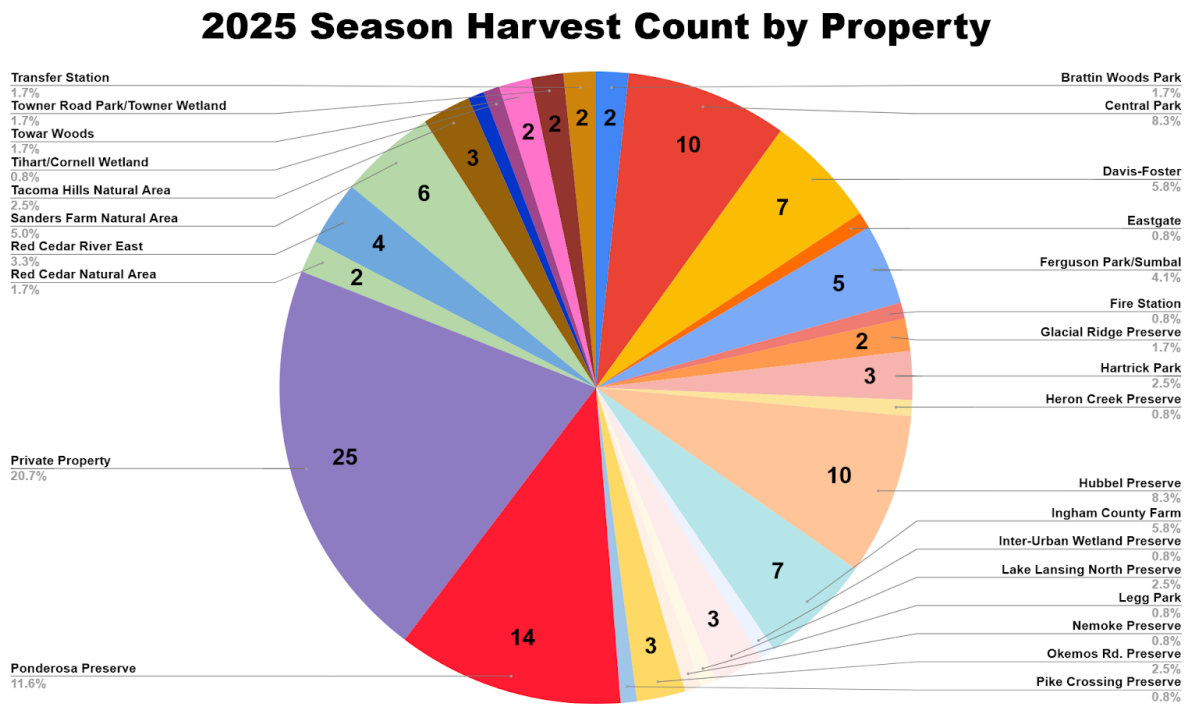


Figure 1: Total number of deer harvested at a property level. Only includes properties with >1 harvest.