



Fact Sheet 2.1 How many deer are there in Ridgefield?

Probably the biggest outstanding question related to the deer hunt is just how many deer there are in Ridgefield. The 2005 Deer Committee report estimated 40-80 deer per square mile and recommended a goal of 20 deer per square mile.

At a 2017 RCC/DMIC meeting, Howard Kilpatrick (CT Department of Energy and Environment, or DEEP) estimated that Ridgefield is probably very close to that number. At a subsequent meeting between the RCC and DMIC, Mr. Zandri stated that the number is likely lower than 20 per square mile at this point, stating that the hunters have done an excellent job.

We now have more recent estimates of the deer population, as outlined below.

From Stefano Zandri email (April 9, 2019)

“When we started the hunt the state had us at 70 plus deer per square mile; this year we were at 40 deer per square mile. I believe the most important information I can give you is that the control hunt accounts for approximately 28-30% of the total deer taken in Ridgefield. That is a significant number, especially because our hunters take mostly does... I certainly cannot, and believe no one can, accurately estimate the deer herd size in our town.”

From Andrew Labonte, DEEP, email (May 10, 2019)

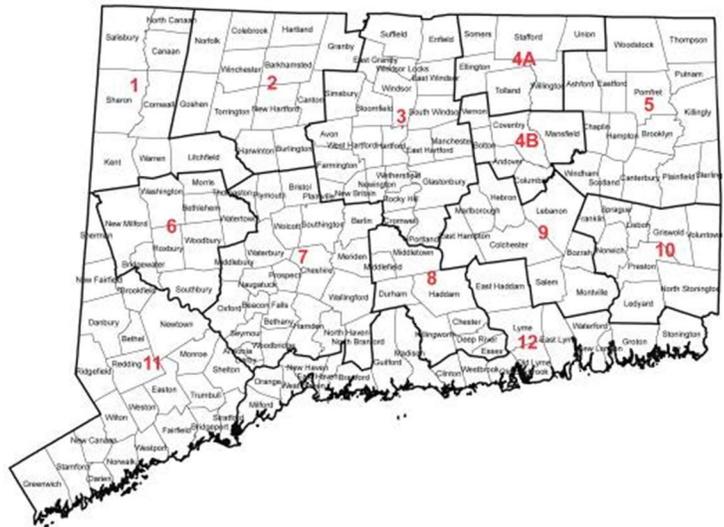
“Fifteen transects (150 miles) were flown in total in Fairfield County DMZ 11 over 3 days in 2019. Based on the actual number of deer observed, the minimum estimate was 20.27 deer/square mile, with a corrected estimate (0.50 suggest observation rate based on Kilpatrick et al.) of 40.53 deer/square mile. Based on the most recent sightability model calculated in 2018

(Kilburn et al. 2018), the estimate would be 38.24 deer/square mile.

Based on the actual number of deer observed back in 2015, the minimum estimate was 25.9 deer/square mile, with a corrected estimate (0.50) of 51.8 deer/square mile, indicating the population may be declining.

Corrections are applied as aerial surveys result in an incomplete detection of animals. The factors used are based on more comprehensive studies of animal populations.

Connecticut's Deer Management Zones, 2008



The Bottom Line

The issue of just how many deer there are in town still remains a question. Recent data and opinions indicate that it is in the neighborhood of 38-40 deer per square mile compared to the goal of 20 per square mile posed in the 2005 Deer Committee report.