

# Deer Control Method Sparks Debate

By Anne Marie Cummings

James LaVeck, one of the co-founders of cayugadeer.org, recently obtained information, through a Freedom of Information Law request, which he says reveals that, "Cayuga Heights Deputy Mayor Bea Szekeley and her colleagues in the Supron administration are exploring the mass slaughter of deer using the controversial netting and bolting technique."

Said LaVeck, "This method of killing deer is currently illegal in New York state and is considered 'cruel and inhuman' by many in the veterinary field." He also stated that it appears that the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) may permit this "barbaric activity to take place."

The Village of Cayuga Heights recently completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) pertaining to proposed actions to engage in deer population control by sterilizing approximately 20 to 60 does, followed by the culling of deer living within the 1.84-square-mile village boundary. The village's board of trustees has accepted the DEIS. Proposed options include: no action, sterilization but no culling, culling but no sterilization, and sterilization in combination with culling and trapping.

When referring to the latter option, which may mean netting and bolting, the DEIS acknowledges, "At the present time, trapping and killing deer is not permitted under the wildlife regulations of NYS. However, if relief could be

secured from that provision via the deer management permit, an alternative to using firearms to cull deer would be to trap deer and use a captive bolt gun. This device instantly kills the animal and is an acceptable form of euthanasia as per the American Veterinary Medical Association. A captive bolt gun has a steel bolt that is powered by either compressed air or a blank cartridge. The bolt is driven into the animal's brain. It has the same effect on the animal as a firearm with a live bullet. A captive bolt gun is safer than a firearm."

According to a statement by Terry Clark, president of the New Jersey SPCA, and backed by Dr. Temple Grandin, one of the nation's experts in designing systems to reduce the stress and suffering of animals before and during slaughter, "The New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NJSPCA) has carefully reviewed the practice of netting and bolting deer as a method of deer population management

The Board of Directors of the NJSPCA has concluded that the net and bolt method of deer management is in fact cruel and not an acceptable form of euthanasia. The NJSPCA believes this technique inflicts substantial pain, stress, and suffering during both the netting and bolting phases of the operation."

The statement also indicates that bolt guns were specifically designed for use on restrained domestic animals in highly structured and controlled environments. "These bolt guns do not cause a



Photo by Alexandra Giordano

The Village of Cayuga Heights is still discussing the best ways to control the local deer population, including netting and "bolting."

quick or clean kill when the animal's head is not immobilized—a difficult if not impossible task given a deer's reaction to drop netting."

Although Gordon Batcheller, chief wildlife biologist for the DEC, did not provide a comment regarding the netting and bolting technique, he suggested to the village (as stated by Szekeley in a Sept. 16 e-mail to Tom Boyce and the village board of trustees), that, "We work individually with each situation, municipality, city, and see what kinds of solutions make sense. In 2011 we will work with the [village] to see what's appropriate. Our job is not to stand in the way of a community solution that makes sense. We'll be involved at the point when

they are ready for us to be involved."

LaVeck responded by stating, "While DEC representatives present themselves as neutral players in this situation, they have their own political and economic agenda. It's clear they are attempting to change or circumvent the net and bolt law for New York state."

Mayor Kate Supron said that the DEC is willing to grant Cayuga Heights the use of net and bolt. "They've told us that it is an option we could consider," she said. She also reiterated that the village has done exhaustive research on this technique. "Seventy to 75 percent of those living in Cayuga Heights are in favor of managing the deer pop-

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## Deer

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ulation and believe that culling deer is a great idea. It's not like we're high-fiving each other and saying, 'Let's kill the deer!'"

According to the DEC, the long-term target is to reduce the deer herd to something in the range of 20 to 60 deer total in the village, "versus the 200-plus as of spring 2009."

LaVeck commented that no one truly knows how many deer actually live in the village. "This divisive, million-dollar backyard slaughter program is being carried out with no scientific study of the deer population, no scientific data specific to biodiversity in Cayuga Heights, and no acknowledgement of what everyone in the community knows to be true: that this issue is not about Lyme disease, or car accidents or biodiversity; it is about frustrated gardeners in Cayuga Heights, where, unlike neighboring municipalities, residents are forbidden from putting up effective deer fencing," he said.

Yet there apparently are reasons why deer choose to stay in Cayuga Heights. Paul Curtis, associate professor and Extension Wildlife Specialist with the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University, explained that 80-90 percent of the female deer stay within the community to set up their home range adjacent to their mothers. "They stay fixed on the landscape," he said. "It's the young male deer that disperse. About 90 percent of the males we tagged dispersed."

Still, Supron believes that the controversy over deer fencing "skirts around the issue of manag-

ing a growing deer population." LaVeck noted that the DEIS did not include deer fencing, or even installing wildlife roadway warning reflectors, as obvious proven alternatives to save the local taxpayers a lot of money.

Netting and bolting was not the technique used to manage a core group of deer on Cornell's campus in the early 2000s. Curtis stated that some 90 percent of the female deer on the Cornell campus have been sterilized. "After three years we have essentially stabilized the herd," he said.

Despite the net and bolt option offered to Supron by the DEC, Supron said she doesn't favor this action. "I thought using professional sharpshooters with a rifle was the safest way to go, however, I remain committed to sterilizing the core group of deer, and then having the others netted and killed."

LaVeck contends that Supron is reluctant to use the term "net and bolt," but he believes that is what she is referring to. "I've never heard of any situation where animals are netted and then shot with a firearm," he said. "A captive bolt pistol is a pistol-shaped device that forces a four-inch metal rod into the animal's skull. In practice, because the animals are terrified, it's very common that the aiming of this device is poor and does not result in instantaneous death."

Jack J. Schrier, a member of the New Jersey Fish & Game council from 2000-05, said that as a council member he consistently voted against the use of net and bolt. "Too often the bolt misses the target, followed by second and third attempts before getting the bolt into the deer. Even then, the head often is missed entirely. Certain, it is not. Swift, it is not. Humane, it surely is not."

## Danby

Continued from page 4

about natural gas, gas extraction and waste removal in the Marcellus and Utica strata can be taken from natural gas industry sources, rather than from blogs and press releases from either side of this contentious issue. Using industry data, including shareholder reports, Ingraffea made a case against the economic windfall, which industry spokespersons have led some landholders to expect. Industry research estimates that, if all conditions are favorable, it would take 50 years to produce three years worth of the U.S. gas supply.

Although the anti-drilling voices were predominant, Ingraffea assumed that leaseholders were part of his audience. "I'd be surprised if there were not some people here who have leased land," he said. No one contradicted him when he asked, "Am I wrong?" Speaking to those who might consider leasing gas extraction rights, Ingraffea urged them to wait for a better time. Gas industry shareholder reports chart the rapid decline curve for income after the first year of production. Given limited corporate capital, Ingraffea expects that the gas companies will focus immediate efforts in Pennsylvania, where drilling is already underway.

Danby residents are aware that, geographically, their town could be at the leading edge of industry interest in drilling for Marcellus and Utica Shale gas. They listened to Ingraffea with rapt attention and took away a deeper understanding of the potential risks, benefits, and

safety concerns... let alone the impacts on Danby's rural quality of life.

## Licensing

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Caroline law is modeled on state law and changes little from the current status under the Department of Agriculture."

Provisions in Caroline's new law have been made for guide dogs and therapy dogs and those that are in an accredited training program. These dogs must have their shots, but aren't charged for the license, Barber explains. Dogs in an animal hospital or shelter are also not subject to license fees, until they are released.


"While the law does not specify fees, a discussion at the board meeting the other night indicated that the board was not inclined to raise license fees beyond what they already are," he adds.

Barber does not expect that, other than the costs of the tags, this will raise expenses much for the Town of Caroline.

"Like Dryden, we already have an animal control law and are already paying for Tompkins County Animal Control," he says. "We have computer software which will allow us to keep track of the dogs and their shot records, and the clerk already keeps track of this information to send it to Albany. Now it will be done in house."

Avery is optimistic that this will be a positive move for Tompkins County in the long run, "It's because of the town clerks, who we are and our ability to work together that this will be a successful program," she says

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#### Toggle

To play, adjust the letters up or down to make a word using the allotted number of moves. Letters may be moved more than one spot, or not at all.  
 Example: **ICMD (5)** makes **GAME** in 5 moves (G > I [2], C > A [2] & D > E [1]).

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