

To The Cayuga Heights Board of Trustees,

Thank you for listening to the community's recommendations regarding the issue of deer "problems" in Cayuga Heights. As you represent us, we can but tell you our wishes and trust in you to carry out the will of the majority.

I am fully against the proposal to bait and kill deer in Cayuga Heights for all of the reasons you have heard and more. I, in fact, don't even think we HAVE a problem with deer in Cayuga Heights and am against the killing of the deer in any way. When I moved here a couple years ago from Long Island, I was thrilled to see deer walking the yards – something that the western half of Long Island has not seen in decades.

The arguments FOR the killing of deer here have all been shown to be either incorrect, mistaken, or false. Lyme disease is not a big problem (it's also very treatable and curable). Cars hitting deer have not increased much lately. Deer droppings are not a danger to kids. There is no "quota" on the number of deer per acre allowed in NY State. The fact that every single possible problem has been used as an excuse for killing the deer seems to indicate that no actual legitimate reason exists. Otherwise, that one legitimate argument could be proven.

Which leaves me wondering what the actual reason is for wanting to eliminate the deer? Is it because they eat the plants people have in their yards? That's a nuisance, and not worth killing innocent animals for. To those who have this problem, there are solutions other than killing an animal that simply finds food and eats it. You can fence better. You can plant OTHER plants that deer don't eat. There are certain sprays that do work to keep deer away, I know someone on West Hill who says her spray works great. Or just move. I mean, don't live in a place with deer if you don't like the deer. Move into town. Move to Long Island. The deer are not purposely targeting your plants and you. They need food, they find food, they eat what they find. Your plants are just plants to them, not YOUR plants. Don't be angry with a creature that eats food you put out. It's like sending you or I to a buffet, handing us a plate, and saying, "go ahead," and then getting angry with us for eating.

The deer aren't being malicious, they don't hate you; they're hungry. Understand this and you won't hate them either. There are better, less violent ways to deal with them.

These "sharpshooters." Who qualifies them as sharpshooters? Have they never had any accidents? If a large stray dog wanders into the area at night while they're waiting, ready to shoot, is it possible they might shoot a dog accidentally? Does your dog ever get out? Mine doesn't, but if she did get out and got shot by a sharpshooter, that would be the end of my life. I myself walk my dog late at night, sometimes in the middle of the night, to clear my head or get out to walk off a problem. What if a sharpshooter accidentally shoots me? Can you guarantee 100% that no dog or person will ever be harmed by one of these shooters? 100%? If not, your choice should be easy.

What are the local gun ordinances for this neighborhood? I'm not willing to change them to eliminate a few deer, personally. Is it sporting to put food down for an animal and then kill it? What happened to Ithaca's famous open-minded, welcoming, fair and even-handed attitude?

This has been tried before in other communities and turned neighbors against each other. It will do the same here. It already is, in the meetings on this matter. Killing the deer will bring more deer from other areas, and more killing, etc. Soon, we'll have no deer in Cayuga Heights anymore, and we'll be down to birds and squirrels as our major forms of wildlife. Just like Long Island.

And then we'll complain about the squirrels. They leave acorn shells on the lawns. People could have accidents trying to avoid them in the street. They carry ticks that carry Lyme Disease. Our dogs might chase a squirrel into the road and get hit by a car, if the dog was unfenced, untethered, and unleashed. Squirrel droppings fall from the trees into our picnic drinks. And it will be time to call in the guns to eliminate the squirrels.

I love this community, it's a wonderful place to live. The deer are PART of MY community. I love the deer. I love to see them wander around, I love to see the fawns playing in the spring, running around like puppies. I think they're great. They're a wonderful part of this area. I rent a house now, but will be buying eventually. If this bait and kill program is approved, I won't be able to buy a home here in Cayuga Heights. It will be too much of a turnoff, too horrible of a thing for me to live near. I'll look elsewhere, perhaps not in Ithaca at all. That's how strongly I feel against this. I would move from an area where the residents felt this program was necessary. I don't want my taxes to go toward something like this when I know there are alternatives. I'm one of the most open-minded people you can meet, I always teeter back and forth toward both sides of any arguments that have good merits. I've seen the arguments pro and con for this deer-killing program and am not teetering at all on this one.

So I ask my friends on the Board to vote against this program. The deer are a part of nature, and we often forget that we are as well. Nature does what it does. Nature can be a nuisance. Sometimes nature causes problems. But just because something is a problem doesn't mean we should start killing it...just because we can and it's easy. That will create new problems. Let's deal with this issue in a more compassionate way, which we –as humans – are capable of doing as well.

Very respectfully yours,

Scott Teel
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Cayuga Heights