Controlled archery hunts of deer in Columbia to start Wednesday

By Kiersten Hacker

Controlled archery hunts in Columbia begin Wednesday, as part of the Columbia Association's long-term plan to address the whitetail deer overpopulation.

The hunts will occur in certain locations in the villages of Kings Contrivance, Owen Brown, River Hill and Town Center. The first is scheduled for Oct. 14, with the rest planned for Oct. 27, Nov. 6, Nov. 20 and Dec. 16.

"Community safety is our top priority. Every aspect of this initiative, from site selection to establishing appropriate safety perimeters, is carefully planned with public safety in mind. We urge residents to remain vigilant and follow all posted signage," Danielle Tyeryar, sustainability manager at the Columbia Association, said in a statement.

Residents will receive notice ahead of the hunts, according to the Columbia Association's website. Signs will also be present in the areas leading up to and on hunting days, and staff from the CA will be at the locations and nearby paths during the hunt times, the website says.

"Controlled archery is one of the safest, most efficient and sustainable methods for deer population control. Hunters use elevated tree stands and take shots at close range, providing clear visibility and reliable target identification — factors that contribute to a strong safety record," the website reads.

Columbia has around 100 deer per square mile, compared with the sustainable level of 20-25 deer, according to the Columbia Association.

The CA hopes to decrease vehicle collisions with deer, reduce concerns about exposure to ticks, protect the environment and strengthen the deer herd.

Over 75% of respondents in a community survey said the deer population in Columbia should be addressed, according to the CA.

Earlier this year, Baltimore City held its first controlled hunt, an effort to curb an overgrown deer population, but the city saw mixed results.

More than 200 deer were removed across three parks.

Goals were met at Druid Hill and Herring Run parks, but biologists fell short at Gwynns Falls-Leakin Park, where 59 deer were culled out of the goal of 103.

In the CA's controlled hunts, hunters participate for free and can keep deer caught in line with regulations.

All hunters must be in Howard County's qualified pool, which requires interviews, background checks, document verification and archery qualification testing.

They're also required to have a valid state hunting license and follow all rules at the state, county and Columbia Association levels.

Have a news tip? Contact Kiersten Hacker at khacker@baltsun.com or @KierstenHacker on X.