

## What You Can Do To Help

To keep wild deer wild, you can help by doing the following:

- \* If you find a fawn, please leave it where you found it. It is normal for female deer to leave their hidden fawns alone for long periods as the adults feed. When humans interfere, chances that a fawn will survive are greatly reduced. A truly injured or orphaned wild animal can be taken to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator (see Licensed Rehabilitators list at [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/) or call 804-367-1258 to locate a rehabilitator).
- \* Report pet or tame deer to VDGIF. While you may hesitate to call if it means the animal will be destroyed, please know that you are doing the right thing. Addressing the problem early will reduce the risks of human injury and disease transmission and prevent more deer from being destroyed in the future.



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Wild deer are a valuable resource to be enjoyed by all Virginians.

## For More Information

You can obtain more information about deer biology and management at [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/deer/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/deer/) or by calling or visiting one of the following offices:

Blacksburg (540) 961-8304  
Chesapeake (757) 465-6809  
Charles City (804) 829-6580  
Farmville (434) 392-9645  
Forest (434) 525-7522  
Fredericksburg (540) 899-4169  
Marion (276) 783-4860  
Richmond (804) 367-0509  
Verona (540) 248-9360

*Please do your part  
to keep wild deer wild!  
Thank you.*



Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries  
P.O. Box 11104,  
4010 West Broad St.  
Richmond, VA 23230-1104  
804-367-1000  
804-367-1278 (V/TDD)  
[www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)

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# Keeping Deer Wild in Virginia



**Why it's important, and  
how you can help.**

**M**any people find white-tailed deer beautiful and wish to rescue or keep them as pets. However, keeping wild deer is both illegal and dangerous. Even the act of moving tame or captive-reared deer may transmit harmful diseases to wild and domesticated animals and even to humans.



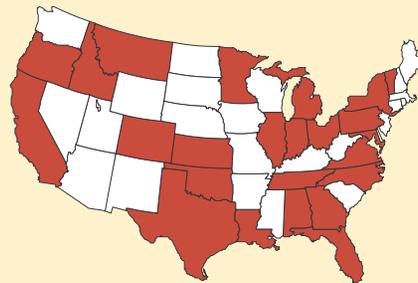
©Jim Kirby

## Why Deer Must Remain Wild

White-tailed deer and other native wildlife belong to no one individual. They are held in trust by the commonwealth for the benefit of all Virginians. As such, it is illegal for individuals to hold or confine deer or other wild animals without a permit (Code of Virginia §29.1-521, 4 VAC 15-30-40). The only facilities allowed to possess native or exotic deer in the state are permitted by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) for research, educational, or rehabilitation purposes only. These facilities, operated by people trained in deer husbandry, are inspected annually for humane care and compliance with state requirements for marking, record-keeping, and disease testing.

Deer, like all wild animals, are potentially dangerous to humans when threatened or confined. They become

aggressive as they mature; males may attack, especially during breeding season. Since 1988, at least 45 deer have attacked humans in the United States or Canada, resulting in 54 injuries and 10 deaths.

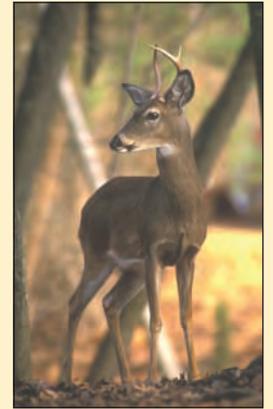


States with newspaper reports (1988–2011) of captive and free ranging deer attacking people.

Moving deer from one place to another or confining them within captive facilities increases the risk of transmitting diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and Bovine Tuberculosis (TB). VDGIF remains vigilant in its attempts to prevent further spread of CWD, which is currently found in Frederick County, Virginia, and adjacent areas of West Virginia.

## What Happens to Tame Deer

When VDGIF discovers a tame deer that is held illegally, agency personnel must confiscate and destroy the animal. This is an unpleasant, but necessary duty. It would be irresponsible to ignore the human safety risks, in-humane conditions, and potential for disease transmission.



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While anger is an understandable reaction to what seems a heartless act, euthanizing the animal is the best option. Why?

- \* A tame deer usually cannot be rehabilitated or released into the wild. Tame deer lose their natural fear of humans as well as their instincts for surviving in the wild. They can become very demanding for attention and food from their caretakers, which makes the deer dangerous. In some cases, hand-raised deer have even caused human deaths by goring and trampling.
- \* Because biologists cannot be sure of the origin of an illegally held deer, or what the deer has been exposed to, they cannot release it into the wild or place it in a zoo or nature park. It could transmit a disease to other wildlife, to domesticated animals, or to humans in the area where it is released.