

Seasonal Deer Activity

January to April

Seasonal Activity – The deer’s metabolism slows, and they become less active to conserve energy. This is the toughest time for deer to survive.

Feeding Habits – They require 4 to 5 pounds of food a day, so they will browse on any available woody plant material.

Control – Check fences regularly. Spray repellents if there is a warm spell. By February remove the tree guards, because most bucks have finished shedding their antlers.

Mid-April to June

Seasonal Activity – Does establish fawning territories, which can range from 5 to 20 acres. A typical doe gives birth to 2 fawns.

Feeding Habits – The new mothers need 7 to 10 pounds of food a day. The deer are now frequently raiding gardens, targeting sprouting herbaceous plant material, bulbs, emerging tree and shrub buds and tender woody shoots.

Control – Start spreading repellents before browsing begins. Keep selective fencing up and gradually remove it in May.

July to Mid-August

Seasonal Activity – Fawns are growing.

Feeding Habits – Garden raids are common and predictable. The deer are eating mostly herbaceous plants and occasionally woody plants.

Control – Spray repellents weekly on herbaceous plants, monthly on woody plants.

Late August to September

Seasonal Activity – Bucks begin rubbing their antlers on trees and shrubs to shed the velvet. The sexes segregate, and males leave their pheromone deposits on the ground that trigger females into estrus cycles.

Feeding Habits – Deer may spend more time in the woods feeding on mast crops like acorns, nuts and fleshy fruit. When these seasonal food sources are plentiful deer spend much less time raiding gardens.

Control – Decrease the frequency of spraying repellents if the deer are not present. Place tree guards around the trunks of plants to protect them from bucks rubbing their antlers.

October to December

Seasonal Activity – The rutting and breeding cycles begin.

Feeding Habits – The deer continue eating mast crops, but raids into gardens become more frequent. They eat mostly herbaceous material and turfgrass until a hard frost forces them to switch to woody plants.

Control – Step up the frequency of spraying repellents. By the time a hard frost hits, be installing temporary fencing around important plants.

By John Van Etten