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June 9, 2024

An Open Letter to BC SPCA

Re: The eradication of every last deer on Sidney Island

In reference to the Sidney Island deer eradication, the BC SPCA's website states:
"The BC SPCA is not opposed to the eradication program given it is scientifically sound, supports reconciliation, will be conducted humanely and ethically, and will result in less animal suffering in the long term".

FACT: There was never any scientific study done as to how many deer were on Sidney Island before Phase 1 began or to date. Parks Canada quotes the wide-ranging numbers of 300-900 fallow deer. They are only referencing *correspondence* from two islanders who are in no way authorities on the topic, are not scientists and are known to be anti-hunters.

FACT: There is no scientific evidence that a full eradication of the non-indigenous fallow deer is possible or that it is necessary for ecological recovery. There was a scientific study by UBC, which concluded, "In summary, we observed increases in the cover, richness, and diversity of palatable and culturally significant woody shrub and tree species from 2013 to 2019 as fallow deer density was reduced". David M. Bird is an Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology at McGill University. He taught wildlife management for 30 years and now lives in North Saanich. He is very familiar with both the deer situation on Sidney Island and their impact on the associated environment. He states: "This valuable study is now (over) four years old, and the deer have consistently been reduced in that time". His letter to the BC SPCA dated Nov. 27, 2023, and his Report on Sidney Island Fallow Deer Population and Its Ecosystem dated Oct. 30, 2023 is attached here for your convenience.

Also, please explain how this eradication on an island that is 80% private, supports reconciliation. How can shooting from a helicopter with semi-automatic weapons and hunting with dogs, fencing and drop nets etc. be considered humane or ethical? These practices are outlawed for a reason, and I do not think that they align with traditional hunting ways.

Phase 2 of Parks Canada's slaughter of ALL the deer (not just the supposedly "invasive" Fallow deer species but also the native Black Tail deer) on Sidney Island is about to begin. What Parks Canada have tried to keep quiet is that they can't tell the difference between Fallow Deer and Native Black Tail deer, therefore they intend to kill every single deer on the island.

I hope that BC SPCA is reconsidering its stance given what we have learned following Phase 1.

Phase 1 was completed over 10 days in Dec. 2023. The cost to taxpayers for those 10 days was

approximately \$830,000. It's been widely reported that the entire project will cost \$5.9 million, but (as I'm sure you've read in the news) a recent Freedom of Information document obtained from Parks Canada by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation shows that the costs have ballooned to just under \$12 million.

Phase 1 involved, (normally illegal methods) of hunting, ie; shooting from helicopters, using semi-automatic weapons with extended magazines, silencers and night shooting. Phase 2 will involve tracking dogs and helicopters to scare deer off private lots onto common property- which PC's contractors call "lethal areas" where they will be fenced in and killed, using up to 10 chase dogs as well as drop nets over bait stations, dropping 30X30 metre nets on the deer before they are shot. How can the SPCA call this humane? BTW the cost of the dogs to Canadian taxpayers, according to the budget obtained by the FOI is \$329,760. And that does not even include their handlers or their transportation from New Zealand.

Prior to Phase 1 beginning, Parks Canada continually stated that Phase 1 would remove 90% of the deer. During Phase 1 the "Expert marksmen" brought in from the US and New Zealand, killed only 84 total deer. Eighteen of which were Native Black Tail deer. Additionally, 3 that were killed were not identifiable. Also of note is that PC's report on Phase 1 says that only 79 of the 84 "dispatched" were harvested. Which means, in layman's terms, that 5 were not found. This means that only 58 fallow deer were confirmed to be killed in phase 1.

The BC SPCA turned down a request from the Sidney Island Deer Management Society (a group that is trying to stop the eradication of all the deer on Sidney Island) to document Phase 1, saying they would only monitor, not document the operation. PC reports that the SPCA was on site 4 days to observe the operation and offer recommendations. Can the SPCA clarify- how many hours they observed Phase 1, what they observed and any recommendations they offered.

Knowing now that Phase 2 operations are planning to have hunters with dogs on the ground from October 2024 - April 2025- will BC SPCA be monitoring Phase 2? How much time will SPCA commit to making sure that Phase 2 of the eradication is being done humanely over that 6 month period?

Dozens of Kilometers of 3 metre high fencing will be erected between July 2024 and October 2024, prior to "lethal" operations and it will remain in place for upwards of a year. When asked how the fencing will be monitored for deer and other wildlife on the island that will surely become entangled in the netting. PC replied: *"The fencing will be monitored daily to promptly address any incidents through a mix of on-the-ground observations by project personnel and trail cameras. Parks Canada and eradication professionals have also collaborated with the Provincial Wildlife veterinarian to establish a response plan for handling incidents in case non-target wildlife becomes entangled".* DO you truly believe that these deer AND collateral entanglements are going to be HUMANE?

Of particular note is that the non-Canadian "professional marksmen" in Phase 1 were heard to have said they believe there are now only about 40 deer left on the island.

I've attached a clip from social media of a town hall meeting with the Conservative Party leader discussing Phase 1 of the Sidney Island deer eradication. On this clip a woman claims the meat that was promised to first nations was a lie because it was "hamburgered".

Anecdotally I've heard that people who saw the state of some of the deer harvested was abhorrent. Please note that three of the dead deer were not identifiable as black tail or fallow! Why were they unidentifiable? Were they shot too many times? Were they "hamburgered"?



For proof that all deer did not die a humane death, attached is a photograph of a dead deer found on the road 2.5 days after phase 1 was completed. Note the scratch marks in the dirt made as the deer died. In a freedom of information request, we now know that Parks Canada tried to cover this up, burying the deer immediately, calling it a vehicle collision. (Note: there were only less than a dozen owners present on the island). This newly dead deer was found at 7:30 in the morning and the island speed limit is 30kph. After an amount of pressure, the deer was exhumed and an on-site, cursory, necropsy was performed by an unskilled PC employee. In the FOI papers, it was finally determined by Parks Canada veterinarians that the deer most likely died due to Phase 1 operations, (and therefore suffered for 2-3 days). This was never made public.

With all the information NOW available to the SPCA I hope that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals PUBLICALLY withdraws its support for this project, which got off the ground in the first place, in some ways due to you publicly supporting the project which has now proven to be a complete travesty!!!

Will you confirm that you will publicly withdraw your support for this program?

Wendy Ord

Full time resident of Sidney Island - Lot 56

Canadian Academy Screen Award Winning Documentary Filmmaker



Pierre Poilievre on Instagram: "Trudeau pays foreign hunters almost \$1 million to use helicopters & rifles Trudeau wants to ban to shoot excess deer on Vancouver Island. He's using your money—\$10,000 per deer—when our hunters would have done it for the meat."
instagram.com