



Press Release

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Hastings-on-Hudson To Launch Deer Immunocontraception Experiment

The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson is working with The Humane Society of the United States and researchers from the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University on a five-year project that seeks to control the area's white-tailed deer population with the use of a PZP (porcine zona pellucida) immunocontraceptive vaccine. With financial support from In Defense of Animals, the project will use this humane and non-lethal vaccine in an effort to substantially lower the birth rates of local does and eventually bring down the population of white-tailed deer.

The experiment will begin March 3rd, 2014. While prior research with the PZP has been carried out on islands or contained areas, this will be the first effort of this sort in a suburban community in this country. Hastings-on-Hudson has examined a range of population-control approaches and decided to pursue immunocontraception as a non-lethal and sustainable method of reducing the herd, which has grown considerably in recent years to untenable levels. The increase in deer has resulted in the destruction of the understory in parks, damage to private gardens, and vehicular accidents.

The Village has worked with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to define the experiment and the DEC issued a "Permit to Collect or Possess" authorizing the study, in December 2013. The protocol has also been reviewed and authorized by the Tufts University/Tufts Medical Center Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

Under the approved protocols, during the winters of 2014 and 2015, approximately 60 female deer will be captured via chemical immobilization delivered via darts. They will be ear-tagged, blood-sampled for pregnancy testing, and administered an initial treatment of PZP. The darting will be carried out by highly trained professionals from the HSUS over a four-week period. Treated deer will be monitored for fawns to determine vaccine effectiveness and longevity for two to three years after initial treatment. All controlled substances and other drugs necessary for capturing and handling deer will be handled and used under veterinary supervision.

If the number of white-tailed deer are substantially reduced over the next five years, the Village will move to a regular protocol in which professionals would dart the deer directly with the PZP agent.

For further information, please contact:

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