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Unsold Area Deer Licenses Pulled

More Than 1,000 Deer Dead In SE South Dakota

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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In the wake of soaring deer deaths, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department has removed all unsold licenses from deer hunting units in six area counties.

Secretary Jeff Vonk took the action after receiving authority from the GF&P Commission last week. The action affects Bon Homme, Hutchinson, Yankton, Clay, Union and Charles Mix counties.

Yankton County conservation officer Sam Schelhaas has seen and heard firsthand the number of deer deaths across southeast South Dakota. The outbreak has worsened over the past month, with most cases attributed to Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) or a similar disease known as bluetongue.

EHD is common in white-tailed deer and is typically detected in late summer or early fall. The virus is spread by a biting midge and causes extensive internal hemorrhaging. EHD is not infectious to human beings.

"We're receiving reports of hundreds of dead deer in Yankton County and each of our surrounding counties. It's gotten worse in recent weeks. We just added another eight to 10 deer (last Friday)," he said.

"We easily have a minimum 700 deaths. I would say we're looking at upwards of 1,000 or more — and that's just southeast South Dakota, and just the ones that are reported. It could be a lot worse."

Nebraska, including the northeast region, has also reported massive deer losses, Schelhaas said.

On its Facebook page, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission reported 4,768 total deer mortalities as of Sept. 28. Knox and Cedar counties each reported 109-444 deer deaths, while Dixon County reported 51-108 deaths.

In South Dakota, Vonk said he recommended removing the unsold licenses based on his department's monitoring of deer deaths. The GF&P Commission took emergency action at last Thursday's meeting in Deadwood. The commission authorized Vonk to reduce immediately the number of licenses available prior to the second drawing of the East River deer hunting season.

The GF&P has conducted surveillance and taken reports of dead deer across many counties in southeast and south-central parts of the state, according to a news release. GF&P is also using aerial flights to help determine the severity of deer mortalities. The action has helped determine the severity of this year's EHD and bluetongue outbreak.

In response, the GF&P is taking

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PHOTO: CHAD SWITZER, GF&P

These mule deer on an Aurora County hillside west of Mitchell detect the presence of others. While mule deer can contract Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) or bluetongue, the current outbreak has hit white-tail deer. The soaring number of deer deaths in southeast South

Dakota has led state Game, Fish and Parks (GF&P) Secretary Jeff Vonk to remove all unsold licenses from deer hunting units in six area counties, including Yankton County.

City Commission

Water Treatment Options Turn Costly

Estimates Come In \$9 Million Higher Than Previously Believed

BY DEREK BARTOS
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Necessary improvements to Yankton's municipal water treatment system will cost approximately \$28 million, \$9 million more than previously thought, the Yankton City Commission was told at its meeting Monday night.

HDR Inc., an architectural, engineering and consulting firm, has been studying Yankton's treatment system and presented its findings at the meeting.

HDR representatives told the commission that the current system will not meet future needs with Yankton's current rate of growth, and recommended actions that included replacing the surface water intake near the Discovery Bridge with collector wells, upgrading the newer of the city's two water plants (which is 40 years old) and decommissioning and replacing the older plant, which has been in service for 80 years. Converting from a lime treatment system to a membrane system was also discussed.

While the proposals varied depending on the systems used, the estimated cost for each was roughly \$28 million with similar operating costs and future expenditures. The additional \$9 million in costs are a result of the damage done to the current water intake during the high water flows that occurred last year.

Interim City Manager Al Viereck said that while the upgrades are expensive, they are necessary given the increase in Yankton's water usage.

"In September we were 45 percent higher than the same time period last year," he said. "And, remember, last year we had flooding, but we really had drought within our community beginning in June ... as far as the moisture we were receiving ... And year to date, we're up almost 32 percent."

With the needs Yankton faces, HDR's Mike Coleman suggested that steps should immediately be taken to upgrade the existing water treatment plant for necessary service, as well as perform testing for the collector wells. A new water treatment plant

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VIGIL VOICES

Dr. Tom Stanage, clinical psychologist and executive director of Lewis & Clark Behavioral Health Services of Yankton discusses the history and success of the Yankton Impact program while speaking at the annual Mental Illness Awareness Week Candlelight Vigil at Trinity Lutheran Church in Yankton Monday night. The annual vigil aims to promote better understanding of mental illness and mental health in the community. The vigil is sponsored by the Yankton chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). (Kelly Hertz/P&D)



School Board Hears Report On YSD Counselor Impact

BY ANDREW ATWAL
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The Yankton School District (YSD) school board heard a report Monday night on the Lewis and Clark and YSD drug and alcohol counselor and the effects that is having on students in YSD.

School board officials also approved a change to the open enrollment policy of YSD to comply with a new state law.

Tiffany Kashas, who is employed by Lewis and Clark Behavioral Health, has been working full-time at Yankton High School (YHS) and Yankton Middle School (YMS) as a drug and alcohol counselor.

When officials were discussing changing the curriculum and hiring a counselor

for the district, they realized they needed to address three areas: having a partnership between community members and YSD, having the funding in place to hire a counselor and implementing evidence-based practices in the district.

"We have made substantial progress in each of those three areas," said Dr. Tom Stanage, CEO of Lewis and Clark Behavioral Health.

Funding for the counselor was provided through a grant. As the program continues to evolve, officials from YSD and Lewis and Clark will hold weekly meetings.

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