

*Most people  
who feed  
wildlife*



USFWS

*are animal lovers with good  
intentions, but this behavior  
ultimately has a negative  
impact on the animals. If we  
really care for our wildlife, we  
have to let them be wild.*

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# Help Keep Wildlife Wild



Chad Anderson/USFWS

*Please don't feed  
the Key Deer*

It is a violation of the Endangered Species Act, making it a federal offense.



## Feeding Harms Key Deer

Every year the National Key Deer Refuge responds to hundreds of Key deer emergencies, most of which are the direct result of human activities. Feeding deer attracts them to roadsides and neighborhoods, exposing them to the following dangers:

### *Cars*

The number one killer of Key deer. In the last decade, 1,150 have been killed by cars!

### *Dog Attacks*

Between 1970-2012, 65 Key deer were killed by dogs.

### *Unhealthy Diet*

Fed deer learn to associate humans and human development with an easy meal. Deer who eat a lot of “junk food” can suffer from poor development and are vulnerable to illnesses and parasites. Some foods (like cracked corn) are known to cause impaction and bloat, resulting in death.

### *Garbage*

Urbanized deer teach their offspring bad foraging behavior, leading them to become dependent on supplemental feeding. Dumpster diving deer can ingest dangerous items like plastic bags, diapers and dental floss which can lead to illness or death.

### *Entanglements*

Urbanized deer often become entangled in things like fishing line, rope, trash cans, and plastic bags. Deer often step in objects that become wrapped around their ankle and imbedded in the skin. Over time, this can cause pain, swelling, and infection. If left untreated, the deer may eventually starve.

Objects removed include plastic milk and soda bottle rings, PVC pipes, zip ties, rubber bands, and metal key rings.

### **Disease Dilemma**

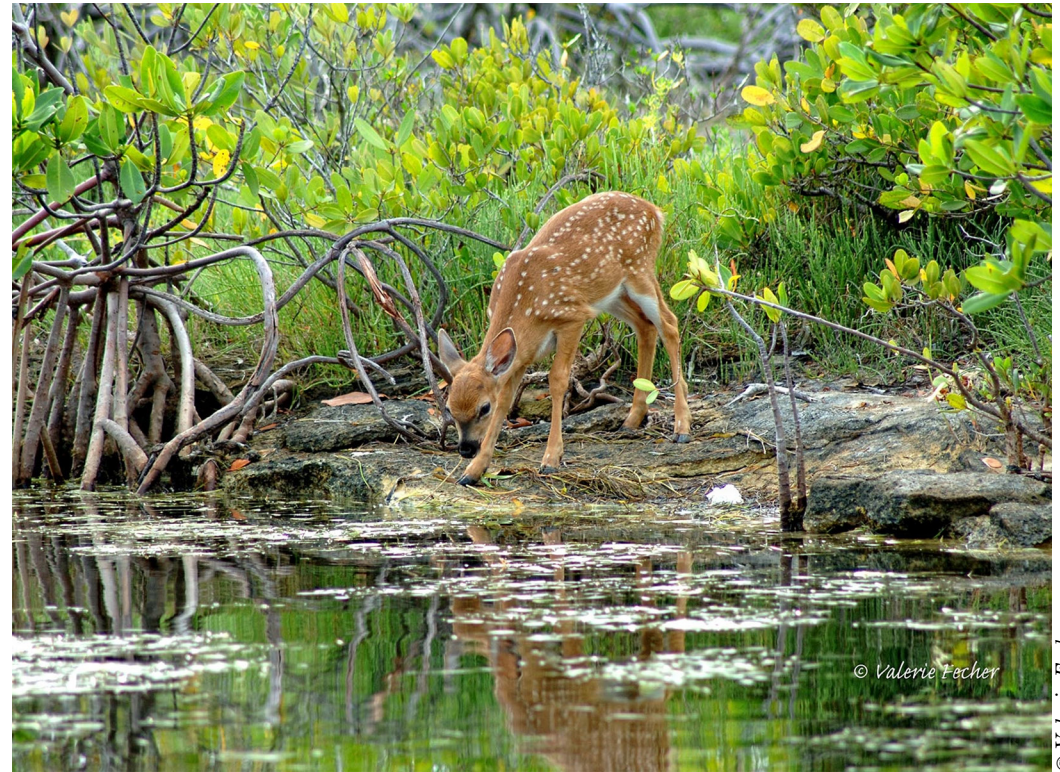
Feeding deer encourages them to congregate in unnaturally high densities, increasing their risk of contracting and spreading diseases. These include:

*Lumpy Jaw* is easily spread through saliva. The most

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*Key deer are perfectly adapted to finding food and water on their own. They eat a diverse variety of native plants, including one of their favorites, the red mangrove.*



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common symptoms are large abscesses on the face, a deformed jaw, and heavy drooling. These painful lumps make it difficult or impossible to eat and drink, which can result in starvation.

*Johne's Disease* is a chronic wasting disease, much like Crohn's disease in humans. Infection causes the walls of the intestines to thicken, impairing the deer's ability to absorb nutrients. The deer can live years with this disease, but they eventually die from malnutrition or starvation.

### **What You Can Do to Help**

- Never feed or water deer!
- Secure your garbage by wildlife proofing your cans with bungee cords, a trashcan corral or other methods.
- Discourage feeding in your neighborhood.
- Don't throw food out of your car window.
- Be a responsible pet owner and don't let your pets roam free.

- Drive carefully in Key deer habitat.
- Take down clothes lines, hammocks, nets and other hazards when not in use.
- Do not approach a sick or injured deer, instead call the Key Deer Emergency Hotline at 305/304 9628.

### **For More Information**

Stop by the Refuge Visitors Center located on Key Deer Boulevard, 1/4 mile north of the traffic light on US 1, in the Winn Dixie Shopping Plaza.

Or call 305/872 0774

Visit our website at [www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer/](http://www.fws.gov/nationalkeydeer/)

And follow us on Facebook!

**To report a sick or injured Key deer, please call our 24/7 emergency hotline at 305/304 9628.**