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Certalert: Deer Hazard to Aircraft and Deer Fencing

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CERTALERT

ADVISORY CAUTIONARY NON-DIRECTIVE
AIRPORT SAFETY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION AAS-300

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT Ed Cleary, (202) 267-3389, AAS-300 (202) 267-3389

Date: 12/13/2004 **No. 04-16**
To: Airport Operators, FAA Airport Certification Safety Inspectors
Topic: Deer Hazard to Aircraft and Deer Fencing

CANCELLATION:

Certalert 01-01. Deer Aircraft Hazard, dated February 1, 2001; and Certalert 02-09. Alternative Deer Fencing, dated December 12, 2002, are cancelled.

BACKGROUND

Elevated deer populations in the United States represent an increasingly serious threat to both Commercial and General Aviation Aircraft. It is currently estimated that there over 26 million deer in the United States. Because of increasing urbanization and rapidly expanding deer populations, deer are adapting to human environments, especially around airports, where they often find food and shelter. From 1990 to 2004, over 650 deer-aircraft collisions were reported to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Of these reports, over 500 indicated the aircraft was damaged as a result of the collision.

In light of recent incidents where a Learjet landing at an airport in Alabama and a Learjet departing an airport in Oregon were destroyed after colliding with deer or elk, airport operators are reminded of the importance of controlling deer and other wild ungulates on and around airfields.

PURPOSE

Proper fencing is the best way of keeping deer off aircraft movement areas. The FAA recommends a 10-12 foot chain link fence with 3-strand barbed wire outriggers. In some cases an airport may be able to use an 8-foot chain link fence with 3-strand barbed outriggers, depending upon the amount of deer activity in a local area.

All fencing must be properly installed and maintained. A 4-foot skirt of chain-link fence material, attached to the bottom of the fence and buried at a 45° angle on the outside of the fence will prevent animals from digging under the fence and reduce the chance of washouts. This type of fencing also greatly increases airport

security and safety. The fence line right-of-way must be kept free of excess vegetation. The fence line should be patrolled at least daily, and any washouts, breaks or other holes in the fence repaired as soon as they are discovered.

Gates should close with less than 6-inch gaps to prevent entry by deer.

When installation of chain link fencing is not feasible due to cost or environmental impacts, other types of fencing may be installed. (Cost alone is not an acceptable reason for rejecting the use of chain link fencing.) In some cases, electric fencing may offer a suitable alternative. Recent improvements in fencing components and design have greatly increased the effectiveness and ease of installation of electric fences. Tests by the USDA, National Wildlife Research Center have shown that some 4 to 6-foot, 5 to 9-strand electric fences designs can be 99% effective at stopping deer. Installation of some of the newer electric fences requires neither specialized equipment nor training and can be accomplished by airport personnel.

In limited situations, the use of non-conductive, composite, frangible electric fence posts and fence conductors may allow the installation of electric fence closer to the aircraft movement area than would normally be allowed with standard chain link fencing material.

If deer are observed on or near the aircraft movement area, immediate action must be taken to remove them.

Airport operators can contact the nearest USDA, Wildlife Services Office or the State Wildlife Management Agency for assistance with deer problems.



December 13, 2004

Ben Castellano, Manager
Airport Safety & Operations Division

Date

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