

# Oh Deer!

**Goals:** Students learn some ideas behind the “food web” concept.

**Time:** 30 min.

**Materials:** Only the instructor needs a pencil and paper.

**Procedure:** Explain to the students that they are going to learn about the food web in a fun game. Divide the students into 2 even groups. Explain that one group will be deer and the other group will be habitat: either food, shelter, or water. The 2 groups will line up at opposite ends of a small open area (preferable outside) and face away from each other. Once the groups are ready, the students will have the choice to be/need food (indicated by the student bringing his hands to his stomach), water (hands to mouth), or shelter (hands over head in an “A” shape). After everyone has made their choice, the instructor will yell “Go!” and both groups will turn around and face each other. The deer must then run to and tag a student in the “habitat” group that matches their own choice. One deer student per habitat student – any deer left without habitat become habitat in the next round, just as any habitat tagged by deer become deer in the next round. The instructor will record the number of deer in each round.

After the game has been played (usually 5-10 rounds), the instructor should make a graph of the number of deer in each round and ask the students to explain the results.

**Variations & Extensions:** These are the real key to this activity. Be creative: Add predators (i.e. mountain lion) that can tag deer as they run towards the habitat students, coach the habitat students to have a drought (no water), a fire (no shelter, food), logging, no predators, etc.

**Background Information:** The instructor should know how to make a proper graph and be familiar with the role of predators, drought, fire, overpopulation, etc. in an ecosystem.

**Other Considerations:** Make sure the deer students can’t see the habitat students when choosing food, water, or shelter, and instruct the deer to run with their hands in place (on their stomach, mouth, or over their heads) so you can better monitor the game (and minimize cheating).

