

Do the Math!

California condor: Nature’s Cleanup Crew!

Mule deer are a common sight in Ventura County’s wild spaces. They are an important part of a food web that includes vegetation like trees and shrubs, consumers like rabbits, and secondary consumers, or predators, like foxes, snakes, and mountain lions. Creatures like California condors, and ravens, as well as the many microscopic fungi, and bacteria make up the scavengers and decomposers in the food web.



Important Facts:

- 170 lbs is the average weight of an adult mule deer.
- Carrying capacity is 40 deer per square mile (CDFW)
- Ventura County is 2208 square miles.

 lbs/deer x deer/mile² x mile² in Ventura County = lbs of deer meat in Ventura County

1. How many pounds of mule deer exist in our county? _____
2. If half of that population dies in any given year (hunting, natural causes), how many pounds of mule deer **carcass** would exist? _____
3. If half of the carcass is taken/eaten by the primary predator (human, mountain lion, etc.), then how many pounds of carcass remains in the environment for scavengers (like California condors) and decomposers?

4. If scavengers and decomposers did not exist, how could we dispose of carcasses throughout the environment?

