

1 Title: Epidemiological modeling of SARS-CoV-2 in white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)  
2 reveals conditions for introduction and widespread transmission.

3

4 Running title: SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in white-tailed deer

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29

30 Abstract

31 Emerging infectious diseases with zoonotic potential often have complex socioecological  
32 dynamics and limited ecological data, requiring integration of epidemiological modeling with  
33 surveillance. Although our understanding of SARS-CoV-2 has advanced considerably since its  
34 detection in late 2019, the factors influencing its introduction and transmission in wildlife hosts,  
35 particularly white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), remain poorly understood. We use a  
36 Susceptible-Infected-Recovered-Susceptible epidemiological model to investigate the spillover  
37 risk and transmission dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 in wild and captive white-tailed deer  
38 populations across various simulated scenarios. We found that captive scenarios pose a higher  
39 risk of SARS-CoV-2 introduction from humans into deer herds and subsequent transmission  
40 among deer, compared to wild herds. However, even in wild herds, the transmission risk is often  
41 substantial enough to sustain infections. Furthermore, we demonstrate that the strength of  
42 introduction from humans influences outbreak characteristics only to a certain extent.  
43 Transmission among deer was frequently sufficient for widespread outbreaks in deer  
44 populations, regardless of the initial level of introduction. We also explore the potential for fence  
45 line interactions between captive and wild deer to elevate outbreak metrics in wild herds that  
46 have the lowest risk of introduction and sustained transmission. Our results indicate that SARS-  
47 CoV-2 could be introduced and maintained in deer herds across a range of circumstances based  
48 on testing a range of introduction and transmission risks in various captive and wild scenarios.  
49 Our approach and findings will aid One Health strategies that mitigate persistent SARS-CoV-2  
50 outbreaks in white-tailed deer populations and potential spillback to humans.

51

52 **Keywords:** SARS-CoV-2; zoonotic disease; SIR; white-tailed deer, outbreak

53 1. Introduction

54 Many emerging infectious diseases in animal populations are transmissible to humans,  
55 representing a public health threat (Taylor et al. 2001; Rahman et al. 2020). These diseases are  
56 called zoonoses and pose One Health challenges, meaning closely linked human, animal, and  
57 ecosystem health challenges that often require coordinated, multi-disciplinary action in the face  
58 of socioecological complexity and limited data (Gibbs 2014; Adisasmito et al. 2022).  
59 Epidemiological models are powerful in understanding and responding to One Health challenges  
60 posed by zoonoses. Using the best-available science, epidemiological models can project the  
61 behavior of zoonotic disease spread across a range of possible conditions, quantify transmission  
62 risk between various host species, and examine the drivers influencing the introduction and  
63 transmission of zoonotic pathogens in wildlife hosts (Keeling and Rohani 2008). These  
64 exploratory inferences are particularly valuable with emerging infectious diseases and can  
65 complement monitoring efforts documenting the spatiotemporal distribution of infections  
66 (Plowright et al. 2019; Wilber et al. 2020).

67  
68 Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in the subgenera  
69 *Sarbecoviruses*, subfamily *Orthocoronavirinae*, is a zoonotic virus that poses One Health  
70 challenges around the globe (Boni et al. 2020; Wu et al. 2020). SARS-CoV-2 infection can result  
71 in severe respiratory disease (known as COVID-19) and death in humans, yet in wildlife species  
72 SARS-CoV-2 severity is highly variable. Since it was first documented in humans in late 2019,  
73 the number of known SARS-CoV-2 hosts has increased and includes a range of companion and  
74 wild animals, including wild and captive white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*; hereafter  
75 deer; Kuchipudi et al. 2022; EFSA panel 2023). Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 can occur

76 between humans, humans and animals, and between animals (Oude Munnink et al. 2021;  
77 Marques et al. 2022). Each of these transmission pathways is concerning from a public health  
78 perspective for several reasons. First, SARS-CoV-2 circulating in human and non-human hosts  
79 can persist, recombine, and evolve into novel variants that change the properties of this pathogen  
80 (Pickering et al. 2022; Tan et al. 2022; Yen et al. 2022; McBride et al. 2023. Second, non-human  
81 hosts can act as a reservoir for SARS-CoV-2, posing risks of SARS-CoV-2 persisting outside of  
82 human hosts (Gryseels et al. 2021; Caserta et al. 2023). Lastly, SARS-CoV-2 may spill back to  
83 humans from non-human hosts as a potentially more virulent form of SARS-CoV-2 (Oude  
84 Munnink et al. 2021). Collectively, these concerns have given rise to surveillance programs of  
85 SARS-CoV-2 in wild and captive white-tailed deer across North America (Bevins et al. 2023).  
86  
87 Two introduction pathways may have led to the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to  
88 deer, a process commonly referred to as ‘spillover’ (Figure 1). First, wild and captive deer could  
89 have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 via direct interactions between humans and deer that are  
90 nearby. This direct pathway likely is a result of the aerosolized transmission of SARS-CoV-2  
91 from humans to deer, given the tissue tropism in the upper respiratory tract of both species  
92 (Palmer et al. 2021; Martins et al. 2022). Direct interactions between humans and deer are  
93 possible in some areas of North America where deer are habituated to humans to the point where  
94 proximity or even contact is possible (Côté et al. 2004). Human-deer interactions are also  
95 common in captive settings, ranging from facilities and herd management activities to exposition  
96 opportunities for visitors. Second, deer could have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 indirectly  
97 through contaminated surfaces, feed, water, or through intermediate animal hosts (Chandler et al.

98 2021). While this indirect pathway has been postulated, evidence of transmission through this  
99 pathway does not currently exist.

100

101 Like SARS-CoV-2 spillover from humans to deer, the spread of SARS-CoV-2 within a white-  
102 tailed deer population could also occur via direct and indirect pathways (Figure 1). Transmission  
103 between deer could occur given various social interactions in wild and captive settings, including  
104 various agonistic and mating behaviors (Hirth 1977; Schauber et al. 2015). Direct transmission  
105 of SARS-CoV-2 between deer might include aerosolized and fluid transmission. Aerosolized  
106 transmission of SARS-CoV-2 between deer could occur within captive facilities where deer  
107 densities are high or in wild settings when deer are near one another. Fluid exchange could also  
108 lead to the transmission amongst deer given social behaviors such as allogrooming in seasonal  
109 social groups (Marchinton and Hirth 1984). Indirect transmission of SARS-CoV-2 between deer  
110 may be possible through fomites, such as contaminated surfaces or feed, however, as previously  
111 mentioned, evidence of indirect transmission between deer is lacking.

112

113 Although our knowledge of SARS-CoV-2 has greatly increased over the last three years, factors  
114 influencing the introduction and transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in wildlife hosts and spillover risk  
115 remain poorly understood. Therefore, we develop a SIRS (Susceptible-Infected-Recovered-  
116 Susceptible) epidemiological model and apply it to wild and captive deer populations in a range  
117 of scenarios to address the following five objectives:

118 **Objective 1:** Evaluate human-deer (introduction) and deer-deer transmission (spread) in  
119 wild and captive deer scenarios to understand the role of pathways in disease dynamics;

120       **Objective 2:** Examine potential ranges of average prevalence, persistence, and incidence  
121       proportion of SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in deer in wild and captive scenarios;

122       **Objective 3:** Understand the interaction among introduction, transmission, prevalence,  
123       persistence, and incidence proportion across all scenarios;

124       **Objective 4:** Test if SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in deer require continual introduction from  
125       humans or just a single introduction event;

126       **Objective 5:** Identify how contact between deer in captive and wild scenarios through  
127       fence line interactions can influence SARS-CoV-2 prevalence and persistence system-  
128       wide.

129       Collectively, this study provides insights into the dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in white-  
130       tailed deer populations and provides evidence for different mechanisms of spillover and  
131       persistence. Our findings inform One Health efforts to reduce future introductions and  
132       transmission among white-tailed deer and diminish the risk of SARS-CoV-2 becoming enzootic  
133       in white-tailed deer across their North American range.

134

135

## 136       2. Methods

137

### 138       2.1. General approach and terms

139

140       We modeled SARS-CoV-2 transmission between humans and white-tailed deer, and among deer  
141       in several scenarios, including two types of captive facilities and wild deer in rural and suburban  
142       environments (Section 2.3). We estimated direct (aerosolized) transmission rates from humans to

143 deer as causing initial deer infections (human-to-deer, hereafter HtD; Section 2.3 & 2.4). We  
144 estimated direct (aerosolized and fluid pathways) transmission rates within wild and captive deer  
145 populations following introduction from humans (deer-to-deer, hereafter DtD; Section 2.3 &  
146 2.4). We used these transmission rates to estimate two important epidemiological parameters  
147 (Objective 1). The introduction of a pathogen, such as SARS-CoV-2 into deer populations, can  
148 be quantified as the common Force-Of-Infection metric from humans to deer ( $FOI_{HD}$ ; Figure 1;  
149 Bjørnstad 2022). Then, SARS-CoV-2 transmission within a deer population can be quantified by  
150 the basic reproductive metric,  $R_0$ , or the number of new infections, in a completely naive  
151 population, originating from one infectious deer over the duration of its infection, with values  
152 greater than one indicating sustained infection throughout a population and values less than one  
153 indicating pathogen fade-out. (Figure 1; Bjørnstad 2022).

154  
155 We projected the outbreak of infections across 120 days in each scenario to incorporate fall deer  
156 behavior (September-December). We focused on the fall season as deer reproductive behavior  
157 results in increased DtD contact rates and multiple hunting seasons and seasonal captive  
158 activities could increase HtD interactions. We used these fall projections to estimate the  
159 prevalence, persistence, and incidence proportion of SARS-CoV-2 in various types of simulated  
160 white-tailed deer populations (Figure 1; Objective 2). We used our simulated data to investigate  
161 the interaction between epidemiological parameters (introduction and transmission) and outbreak  
162 characteristics in deer populations (prevalence, persistence, and incidence proportion; Objective  
163 3). We contrasted outbreak dynamics from continuous introduction from humans, compared to  
164 those from a single, initial infection event with no further introduction from humans (Objective  
165 4). Finally, we ran the 120-day projection for wild and captive populations connected through a



166 single-layer fence to explore how interactions between captive and wild deer may influence the  
167 prevalence and persistence of SARS-CoV-2 in both populations (Objective 5).

168

## 169 2.2. Epidemiological model

170

171 To understand SARS-CoV-2 transmission between humans and deer and within deer  
172 populations, we developed a two-host (captive and wild deer) Susceptible-Infected-Recovered-  
173 Susceptible (SIRS) model (Figure 2; Keeling and Rohani 2007). We considered two primary  
174 introduction pathways, including aerosolized SARS-CoV-2 transmission in shared airspace, and  
175 fluid transmission from sputum or other contagious discharges upon direct contact. For DtD  
176 transmission, we integrated both transmission pathways, while for HtD transmission, we  
177 estimated aerosolized transmission only. Humans were included as a source of infection, but  
178 human disease dynamics were not modeled as a response to disease dynamics in deer.

179

180 We made several assumptions either inherent in our SIRS approach or that incorporate patterns  
181 documented in the relevant literature. We assume that: transmission rates are additive;  
182 transmission rates are the same for naïve susceptible deer and recovered deer that have lost  
183 temporary immunity and are again susceptible; DtD transmission rates in wild scenarios and  
184 captive scenarios mimic wild conditions and are intermediate between frequency- and density-  
185 dependent transmission (see Section 2.2.1; Storm et al. 2013). DtD transmission rates in  
186 intensive captive scenarios and across fence lines, and HtD transmission rates in all scenarios are  
187 constant and frequency-dependent, based on available data (Section 2.3); DtD transmission rates  
188 via fluids only occurs when an infected and a susceptible individual are in proximity, including

189 along fence lines; human prevalence is constant across each 120-day projection; there is  
190 homogenous mixing within captive and wild deer populations; recovery from infection and loss  
191 of immunity do not differ between captive and wild deer; there is no viral evolution; there is no  
192 disease-induced mortality (Martins et al. 2022); there is no spillback from deer to humans (or at  
193 least, such spillback does not affect the disease dynamics in the deer population); and deer  
194 populations are closed, with no births, deaths, immigration, or emigration. On this last  
195 assumption, we recognize that many deer are harvested in the season we chose to simulate. We  
196 assume that harvest is random within the population such that the proportion of individuals  
197 within the various disease compartments of the SIRS model are unaffected.

198

199 The SIRS model was specified with a system of six ordinary differential equations (ODE)  
200 (Keeling and Rohani 2007; Section 2.2.1), and we derived rates for aerosolized and fluid  
201 transmission (Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, respectively). We tracked the fractions of a population  
202 that are susceptible ( $s$ ), infected ( $i$ ), and recovered ( $r$ ), rather than the number of individuals in  
203 each compartment. Human prevalence is fixed and not explicitly modeled in this study ( $i_H$ ). In  
204 the equations that follow, our notation includes superscripts to indicate the mode of transmission,  
205 including: “Aero”, to indicate transmission by aerosols; and “DC” to indicate transmission via  
206 fluid exchanged through direct contact. We use subscripts to indicate the individuals in a  
207 particular transmission interaction: transmission between wild deer (WW); transmission between  
208 captive and wild deer (CW); transmission between captive deer (CC); transmission from humans  
209 to wild deer (HW); and transmission from humans to captive deer (HC).

210

211 *2.2.1. Ordinary Differential Equation*

212

213 Three ODEs describe the disease dynamics in the wild deer population, with the daily change in  
214 the fraction of the wild population that is susceptible ( $s_w$ ) given by

215

$$216 \quad \frac{ds_w}{dt} = \alpha r_w - s_w(\beta_{WW}^{Aero} i_w + \beta_{WW}^{DC} i_w + \beta_{CW}^{Aero} i_c + \beta_{CW}^{DC} i_c + \beta_{HW}^{Aero} i_h), \quad (1)$$

217

218 the daily change in the fraction of the wild population that is infected ( $i_w$ ) given by

219

$$220 \quad \frac{di_w}{dt} = s_w(\beta_{WW}^{Aero} i_w + \beta_{WW}^{DC} i_w + \beta_{CW}^{Aero} i_c + \beta_{CW}^{DC} i_c + \beta_{HW}^{Aero} i_h) - \gamma i_w, \quad (2)$$

221

222 and the daily change in the fraction of the wild population that is recovered ( $r_w$ ) given by

223

$$224 \quad \frac{dr_w}{dt} = \gamma i_w - \alpha r_w, \quad (3)$$

225

226 where  $\alpha$  is the immunity loss rate;  $\beta$  is the transmission rate specific to the infectious and  
227 susceptible host recipient type (e.g., wild or captive deer) and interactions (i.e., aerosolized or  
228 direct contact); and  $\gamma$  is the recovery rate from infection (Figure 2).

229

230 Three additional ODEs describe the disease dynamics in captive deer, with the daily change in

231 the fraction of the captive population that is susceptible ( $s_c$ ) given by

232

233 
$$\frac{ds_C}{dt} = \alpha r_C - s_C(\beta_{CC}^{Aero} i_C + \beta_{CC}^{DC} i_C + \beta_{CW}^{Aero} i_W + \beta_{CW}^{DC} i_W + \beta_{HC}^{Aero} i_H), \quad (4)$$

234

235 the change in the fraction of the captive population that is infected ( $i_C$ ) given by

236

237 
$$\frac{di_C}{dt} = s_C(\beta_{CC}^{Aero} i_C + \beta_{CC}^{DC} i_C + \beta_{CW}^{Aero} i_W + \beta_{CW}^{DC} i_W + \beta_{HC}^{Aero} i_H) - \gamma i_C, \quad (5)$$

238

239 and the change in the fraction of the captive population that is recovered ( $r_C$ ) given by

240

241 
$$\frac{dr_C}{dt} = \gamma i_C - \alpha r_C. \quad (6)$$

242

243 We monitored proportions through these projections to reduce assumptions about population size  
244 in either wild or captive settings.

245

### 246 2.2.2. *Aerosolized Transmission*

247

248 Aerosolized transmission rates between a host  $i$  and recipient  $j$  ( $\beta_{ij}^{Aero}$ ) can be described as

249

250 
$$\beta_{ij}^{Aero} = \omega_{ij} * \sigma^{Aero} \quad (7)$$

251

252 where  $\omega_{ij}$  is the proximity rate between host-recipient( $i,j$ ) type (human-wild deer, human-captive  
253 deer, wild deer-wild deer, captive deer-captive deer, wild deer-captive deer, captive deer-wild  
254 deer); and  $\sigma^{Aero}$  is the probability of infection from aerosols.

255

256 We define proximity  $\omega_{ij}$  as the frequency per day that host  $i$  and recipient  $j$  are within 1.5 meters  
257 (m) of each other, drawn from existing social distancing guidelines for humans which range from  
258 1-2 meters (Chu et al. 2020; Feng et al. 2020). We estimate the proximity rate for wild deer,  
259  $\omega_{WW}$ , based on a contact rate model developed by Habib et al. (2011) for chronic wasting disease  
260 in white-tailed deer that permits density- or frequency-dependent transmission as well as  
261 intermediate cases that blend these two standard transmission processes. This rate applies to  
262 deer-deer transmission in most scenarios, including cases with and without attractants (e.g., bait,  
263 supplemental feed; see Section 2.3). We apply this model for captive circumstances that mimic  
264 natural conditions (see Section 2.3). It is given by

265

$$266 \quad \omega_{ij} = \kappa \left( \frac{N_W^{(1-q)}}{A_W} \right) * \rho_{attractant} \quad (8)$$

267

268 where  $\kappa$  is a scaling constant;  $q$  is a concavity scaling constant of the density-contact rate  
269 relationship ranging from 0 – 1, which allows an intermediate blend of density-dependence to  
270 frequency-dependence, respectively (Habib et al. 2011);  $N_W$  is the total population size;  $A_W$  is the  
271 area inhabited by the population;  $\rho_{attractant}$  is the adjustment for the presence of an attractant  
272 ( $\rho_{attractant} = 1$  indicates no attractants present;  $\rho_{attractant} > 1$  indicates attractants present).

273

274 All other proximity rates, including captive-captive deer ( $\omega_{CC}$ ), captive deer-wild deer ( $\omega_{CW}$ ),  
275 human-wild deer ( $\omega_{HW}$ ), and human-captive deer ( $\omega_{HC}$ ) were not explicitly modeled, and instead  
276 were drawn from parametric distributions (Section 2.3).

277

278 The probability of infection,  $\sigma^{Aero}$ , given proximity, is a function of the instantaneous dose  
279 received and a Wells-Riley dose-response relationship given by

280

$$281 \quad \sigma^{Aero} = 1 - e^{-\theta Q} \quad (9)$$

282

283 where  $\theta$  is the species-specific rate of infection from 1 quantum of SARS-CoV-2; and  $Q$  is the  
284 dose (quanta) received by a single contact with an infected individual. Buonanno et al. (2020)  
285 defines a quantum as “the dose of airborne droplet nuclei required to cause infections in 63% of  
286 susceptible human individuals.” Therefore,  $\theta > 1$  corresponds to 1 quantum causing infection in  
287  $>63\%$  of susceptible individuals, and  $\theta < 1$  corresponds to 1 quantum causing infection in  $<63\%$   
288 of susceptible individuals (Wells 1934; Gammaitoni and Nucci 1997; Buonanno et al. 2020).

289

290 To estimate the dose received by a susceptible individual ( $Q$ ) we modeled (1) the emission of  
291 SARS-CoV-2 from an infectious individual ( $ER_q$ ) and (2) the resulting concentration of SARS-  
292 CoV-2 in a designated airspace around an infectious individual, considering viral emission and  
293 viral loss. First, an infected individual emits virions at a particular rate ( $ER_q$ ; quanta/hr) as the  
294 product of the viral load in its exhalation ( $C_v$ ; RNA copies/ml), a conversion factor ( $C_i$ ;  
295 quanta/RNA copy), the inhalation/exhalation rate ( $IR$ ;  $m^3/hr$ ), and the exhaled droplet volume  
296 concentration ( $V_{drop}$ ; ml droplets/ $m^3$  exhaled; Mikszewski et al. 2021) given by

297

$$298 \quad ER_q = C_v * C_i * IR * V_{drop}. \quad (10)$$

299

300 We then use the emission rate to model the instantaneous concentration of virions ( $C$ ; quanta/ $m^3$ )  
301 in a well-mixed airspace ( $V_{air}$ ;  $m^3$ ) around an infected individual ( $ER_q$ ; quanta/hr). We assumed  
302 that the airspace around an infected individual was a half-sphere with a radius of 1.5 m, or 7.07  
303  $m^3$ . We account for viral loss as the sum of air exchange ( $AER$ ;  $hr^{-1}$ ), settling ( $s$ ;  $hr^{-1}$ ), and  
304 inactivation ( $\lambda$ ;  $hr^{-1}$ ; modified from Buonanno et al. 2020). Thus, the instantaneous concentration  
305 is given by

306

$$307 \quad C = \frac{ER_q}{(AER+s+\lambda)*V_{air}}. \quad (11)$$

308

309 When a susceptible individual enters the contaminated airspace surrounding an infectious  
310 individual, the dose ( $Q$ ; quanta) is the product of the inhalation rate of the susceptible individual  
311 ( $IR$ ;  $m^3/hr$ ), the concentration of virions in the fixed volume ( $C$ ; quanta/ $m^3$ ), and the duration of  
312 contact ( $t_{contact}$ ; hr) given by

313

$$314 \quad Q = IR * C * t_{contact}. \quad (12)$$

315

### 316 *2.2.3. Fluid transmission*

317

318 We model fluid transmission rate for deer conditional on proximity with another deer (eqn. 8).

319 Fluid transmission rates between a host and recipient ( $\beta_{ij}^{DC}$ ) are given by

320

$$321 \quad \beta_{ij}^{DC} = \omega_{ij} * \varepsilon^{DC} * \sigma^{DC} \quad (13)$$

322

323 where  $\omega_{ij}$  is the proximity rate between host-recipient( $ij$ ) type (wild deer-wild deer, captive deer-  
324 captive deer, captive deer-wild deer);  $\varepsilon^{DC}$  is the probability of direct contact conditional on  
325 proximity; and  $\sigma^{DC}$  is the probability of infection from direct contact.

326

327 The probability of infection,  $\sigma^{DC}$ , given contact, was modeled similarly to eqn.9, as a log-logistic  
328 function of dose and the reciprocal probability of infection given exposure to a single dose,  $k$   
329 (Watanabe et al. 2010). The dose received is a product of the transferred sputum volume given  
330 contact,  $V_{sputum}$ , and viral concentration in sputum,  $C_v$  given by

331

$$332 \quad \sigma^{DC} = 1 - e^{-((C_v \times V_{sputum})/k)} \quad (14)$$

333

334 where  $C_v$  is the viral concentration in sputum (in plaque-forming units; PFU);  $V_{sputum}$  is the  
335 volume of sputum transferred given contact; and  $k$  is the reciprocal of the probability of a single  
336 PFU causing infection.

337

### 338 2.3. Scenario descriptions

339

340 We estimated HtD and DtD transmission and outbreak characteristics in four scenarios: (1) wild  
341 deer in a rural setting, (2) wild deer in a suburban setting, (3) captive deer in an outdoor ranch,  
342 and (4) captive deer in an intensive facility (Figure 2). These scenarios span a range of possible  
343 habitat or captive facility conditions, deer densities, and proximity rates with humans; although  
344 each of these variables is a continuous metric, we discretized the scenarios to make them easier  
345 to interpret.



346

347 Below, we present parameter estimates used in each simulation (Table 1). For parameters that  
348 were unavailable in the literature, we conducted expert elicitation using the IDEA protocol and a  
349 four-point elicitation process (Speirs-Bridge et al. 2010; Hanea et al. 2017). We included 11  
350 experts on two separate panels: one focused on SARS-CoV-2 virology and another on deer  
351 behavior in captive and wild settings. The estimates for 13 parameters we solicited from experts  
352 are listed in Table 1. Experts and their affiliations, elicitation methods, the elicitation questions  
353 for each panel, and individual (anonymous) and aggregated probability distributions are reported  
354 in Supplemental Materials. For study Objectives 1 to 4, fence line transmission was fixed at zero  
355 to capture outbreak dynamics within these specific scenarios. This transmission rate was restored  
356 for the final study objective exploring the influence of linked scenarios across fence lines in  
357 outbreak dynamics.

358

359 *Wild deer in a rural setting* – Wild deer are free-ranging in an area with a rural human density.  
360 (3.1 humans/km<sup>2</sup>; 15<sup>th</sup> percentile of U.S. counties with <100 humans/km<sup>2</sup> overlapping white-  
361 tailed deer range; Pozzi and Small 2002; Walters et al. 2016; U.S. Census Bureau 2020, available  
362 from: <https://www.census.gov/geographies/mapping-files/time-series/geo/tiger-line-file.html>).  
363 We assumed that deer interacted with humans during regulated hunting either using still-hunting,  
364 or ground blind or tree stand tactics but were not harvested. We also assumed that baiting and  
365 backyard feeding were illegal but may still occur. We calculated wild DtD proximity rates using  
366 a population density of 10 deer/km<sup>2</sup> for an area with 26% wooded habitat (Habib et al. 2011).  
367 We assumed that Habib et al.'s (2011) estimated 25m proximity rate applied to our definition of  
368 proximity of 1.5m for aerosol transmission. HtD transmission was derived by estimating the rate

369 and duration of human-deer proximity events and a fixed human prevalence of 5% (Table 1;  
370 Section 2.4). Wild deer in a rural setting had the lowest rate and duration of these human-deer  
371 proximity events (Table 1). We calculated and applied air-exchange rates (AER; 4<sup>-hr</sup>) based on a  
372 15-minute residence time drawn from a range of published values for forest airflow studies  
373 (Gerken et al. 2017; Bannister et al. 2023; Table 1).

374

375 *Wild deer in a suburban setting* – Wild deer are free-ranging in an area of suburban human  
376 density (100 humans/km<sup>2</sup>; Pozzi and Small 2002). DtD proximity rates were derived using the  
377 same parameters as used in the rural scenario, and the AER value used was the same as in the  
378 rural scenario (Table 1). Wild deer in a suburban setting experience higher HtD transmission  
379 rates, driven by higher HtD proximity rates and longer duration of proximity events, relative to  
380 wild deer in a rural setting (Section 2.4; Table 1).

381

382 *Captive deer in an outdoor ranch* – We considered captive deer in an outdoor ranch facility  
383 typical of a managed, fenced hunting reserve. We assumed that deer stocking densities resulted  
384 in the same DtD proximity rates as were estimated in wild scenarios, with an increase in  
385 proximity rates due to supplemental feeding (Section 2.4; Table 1). We used the same AER  
386 value as in wild settings as these captive individuals reside outside. We assume HtD proximity  
387 rates are the same as those estimated for the “wild deer in a suburban setting” scenario, but the  
388 typical duration of these proximity events is longer in this scenario, reflecting those typical of a  
389 captive facility (Table 1).

390

391 *Captive deer in an intensive facility* – The last scenario considered was captive deer in a captive  
392 breeding or exposition facility. Deer in this type of facility were predominantly indoors at high  
393 stocking densities and low indoor air exchange rates (AER;  $1^{-hr}$ ). Both DtD and HtD proximity  
394 rates and duration were highest in this scenario (Section 2.4; Table 1).

395  
396 *Objective 1: Differences in human-to-deer and deer-to-deer transmission across scenarios* – We  
397 quantified the strength of HtD transmission in each scenario using Force-of-Infection  
398 calculations from humans to deer ( $FOI_{HD}$ ; eqn. 15). These FOI calculations are based on HtD  
399 transmission rates ( $\beta_{HD}^{Aero}$ ; eqn. 7) and human prevalence ( $i_H$ ) and equate to the proportion of  
400 susceptible deer infected by infectious humans per day.

401

$$402 \quad FOI_{HD} = \beta_{HD}^{Aero} i_H \quad (15)$$

403

404 We also report the probability of at least one HtD transmission per 1,000 deer ( $N$ ) over the fall  
405 season ( $t = 120$  days), using a constant hazard model (Kalbfleisch and Prentice 2011; eqn 16).

406

$$407 \quad p(HtD|FOI_{HD}, N, t) = 1 - (e^{-FOI_{HD}t})^N \quad (16)$$

408

409 We quantified the strength of DtD transmission for each scenario using the number of  
410 susceptible deer infected by a single infectious deer,  $R_0$ , derived from the sum of aerosol and  
411 fluid transmission rates over the recovery period from infection ( $\gamma$ ; eqn. 17). Again,  $R_0$  values  
412 greater than one indicate sustained transmission throughout a population, and values less than  
413 one indicate pathogen fade-out.

414

$$R_0 = \frac{\beta_{ij}^{Aero} + \beta_{ij}^{DC}}{\gamma}.$$

416 (17)

417 We compare  $FOI_{HD}$ ,  $p(HtD)$ , and  $R_0$  estimates across scenarios to evaluate differences in the  
418 potential for SARS-CoV-2 to be transmitted from humans to deer and then spread amongst deer.

419 All calculations were conducted in R (R Core Team 2023).

420

421 *Objective 2: Average prevalence, persistence of infection, and incidence proportion in each*  
422 *scenario* – We used the six ODEs for the SIRS model, parameters estimated from the literature  
423 or expert elicitation, and derived transmission parameters to project continual SARS-CoV-2  
424 introduction and spread across each scenario of interest (Table 1). From these projections, we  
425 calculated the proportion of individuals in the wild, captivity, or in both settings that were  
426 susceptible, infectious, or recovered. We ran 1,000 iterations for each of the four scenarios. Each  
427 iteration had a randomly drawn parameter set, where we randomly drew one value from each  
428 parameter distribution during each iteration, resulting in 1,000 parameter sets used to project  
429 outbreaks in each scenario (Table 1). Parameters that were constant across scenarios did not vary  
430 between parameter sets which ensured that any observed variation was due to differences across  
431 scenarios, and not sampling variation from repeated random draws from error distributions.

432

433 We projected the proportional size of each SIRS compartment for 120 days for each iteration,  
434 using the ODE solver *ode()* from the *deSolve* package in R (Soetaert et al. 2010; R Core Team  
435 2023). We estimated the average daily prevalence of deer in each scenario during the 120-day  
436 projection. We determined if SARS-CoV-2 would persist beyond the 120-day projection for each

437 iteration using the *runsteady()* function from the rootSolve package (Soetaert 2009; Soetaert and  
438 Herman 2009) to estimate the deterministic stable state from the SIRS ODE equation. We  
439 assigned each iteration a logical value if infectious compartment at equilibrium was >0.1% for  
440 each iteration (at least 1 deer infected out of 1 000). We estimated mean probability of  
441 persistence and 95% binomial confidence intervals using the *binom.confint()* function with the  
442 exact method from the binom package for each scenario (Dorai-Raj 2022). Finally, we tracked  
443 the incidence proportion, or cumulative proportion of the population infected over the 120 days  
444 during these simulations for wild and captive deer (eqn. 18 and 19). This incidence proportion  
445 could exceed 1, indicating that all individuals in the population were infected at least once.

446

447 *Incidence proportion<sub>w</sub>*

$$448 \quad = \sum_{t=1}^{120} s_{W,t-1} (\beta_{WW}^{Aero} i_{W,t-1} + \beta_{WW}^{DC} i_{W,t-1} + \beta_{CW}^{Aero} i_{C,t-1} + \beta_{CW}^{DC} i_{C,t-1} + \beta_{HW}^{Aero} i_H)$$

449 (18)

450 *Incidence proportion<sub>c</sub>*

$$451 \quad = \sum_{t=1}^{120} s_{C,t-1} (\beta_{CC}^{Aero} i_{C,t-1} + \beta_{CC}^{DC} i_{C,t-1} + \beta_{CW}^{Aero} i_{W,t-1} + \beta_{CW}^{DC} i_{W,t-1} + \beta_{HC}^{Aero} i_H)$$

452 (19)

453

454 We summarized these three measures across iterations in each scenario with the median value  
455 and 80% confidence intervals. These include median average prevalence, median probability of  
456 persistence, and median incidence proportion.

457

458 *Objective 3: Interaction between spillover, spread, prevalence, and persistence* – After each  
459 iteration, we categorized outcomes by one of the following spread categories: unsustained spread  
460 ( $R_0 < 1$ ), low, sustained spread ( $1 < R_0 \leq 3$ ), medium, sustained spread ( $3 < R_0 \leq 5$ ), and high,  
461 sustained spread ( $R_0 > 5$ ). We used the *stat-smooth()* function from the ggplot2 package (Hadley  
462 2016) to visualize trends between HiD transmission, as quantified by FOI, prevalence, and  
463 persistence of SARS-CoV-2 for each spread category.

464

465 *Objective 4: SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in deer from a single introduction event* – We tested  
466 whether a SARS-CoV-2 outbreak can occur following a single spillover event, in contrast to the  
467 continual introduction modeled above for the other objectives. We simulated this introduction as  
468 an initial event that resulted in 0.1%, 1e-4 %, and 1e-7 % prevalence in deer at the start of the  
469 120-day projection, with no further introduction from humans. We compared differences in  
470 prevalence, incidence proportion, and persistence between these initial spillover simulations and  
471 the continuous spillover simulation investigated for the other objectives.

472

473 *Objective 5 Effects of fence line interactions between wild and captive deer on SARS-CoV-2*  
474 *prevalence and persistence on either side of the fence* – We extended our SIRS model to allow  
475 fence line interactions between captive and wild deer. To do this we projected outbreaks for  
476 paired captive -wild scenarios separated by a fence, using combinations of the two captive and  
477 two wild scenarios and associated parameters described above ( $n = 4$  combinations; hereafter  
478 systems). We added fence line contact probability and allowed all individuals to interact along  
479 fence lines, enabling proximity and direct contact (Table 1).

480

### 481 3. Results

482

#### 483 *3.1. Objective 1: Differences of introduction and spread for white-tailed deer across settings*

484 The risk of introduction of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to deer varied within and across scenarios  
485 (eqn 15 and 16, respectively; Figure 3; Table 2). Median FOI<sub>HD</sub> estimates were 219-, 85-, and  
486 19-times higher in the intensive facility, outdoor ranch, and wild deer in suburban scenarios,  
487 respectively, relative to median FOI<sub>HD</sub> estimates for rural, wild deer (Table 2). Median  
488 probabilities of at least one HTD transmission per 1000 deer ranged from 88%, 56.1%, 17.7%,  
489 and 1.1% in the intensive facility, outdoor ranch, wild suburban, and wild rural scenarios,  
490 respectively (Table 2). There was high uncertainty around risk of introduction in each scenario,  
491 with detectable differences between the intensive facility and wild deer in rural setting using  
492 80% confidence intervals (Table 2). SARS-CoV-2 transmission between deer ( $R_0$ ; eqn 18) was  
493 greater in captive scenarios relative to wild scenarios, with most iterations sustaining  
494 transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among the deer population (Table 2). Transmission in both wild  
495 scenarios were nearly identical, with most iterations resulting in  $R_0$  values too small to sustain  
496 transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (median  $R_0 = 0.97$ ; Table 2).  $R_0$  values were highly variable in  
497 each scenario leading to no detectable differences with 80% confidence (Table 2).

498

#### 499 *3.2. Objective 2: Average prevalence, persistence of infection, and incidence proportion in*

500 *each setting*

501 Simulated outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 were variable across scenarios, with higher average  
502 prevalence, incidence proportions, and probability of persistence in captive scenarios relative to  
503 wild scenarios (Table 2; Figure 4). Intensive facilities had the highest average prevalence,

504 incidence proportion, and probability of SARS-CoV-2 persistence, followed by the outdoor  
505 ranch scenario and both wild scenarios (Table 2). Median outbreak metrics in both wild  
506 scenarios, while much lower than captive scenarios, were slightly elevated in the suburban  
507 setting compared to the rural setting (Table 2). Overall, there was high variability in these  
508 metrics in each scenario, with non-overlapping 80% confidence for the probability of persistence  
509 in the intensive facility, outdoor ranch, and wild scenarios (Table 2; Figure 4).

510

511 *3.3. Objective 3: Interaction between spillover, transmission, prevalence, incidence*  
512 *proportion, and persistence*

513 When we partitioned the relationship between FOI<sub>HD</sub> and outbreak characteristics, we found  
514 compelling evidence that FOI<sub>HD</sub> differs depending on how quickly SARS-CoV-2 transmits ( $R_0$ ,  
515 Figure 5). When transmission is too low to sustain SARS-CoV-2 ( $R_0 < 1$  deer infected by an  
516 infected deer), high FOI<sub>HD</sub> is required for non-zero average prevalence and incidence proportion  
517 during the projection, and for a high probability of infections persisting past the 120-day  
518 projection (Figure 5). As transmission reaches self-sustaining levels ( $1 < R_0 < 3$  deer infected by  
519 an infected deer), the role of FOI<sub>HD</sub> has a greater influence on average prevalence, incidence  
520 proportion, and persistence (Figure 5). As  $R_0$  continues to increase to medium ( $3 < R_0 \leq 5$  deer  
521 infected by an infected deer) and high spread ( $R_0 > 5$  deer infected by an infected deer), the  
522 influence of FOI<sub>HD</sub> on prevalence and incidence proportion diminishes, and persistence is no  
523 longer sensitive to changes in FOI<sub>HD</sub>. (Figure 5).

524

525 *3.4. Objective 4: SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in deer from a single introduction event*



526 Differences in outbreak characteristics exist between continual introduction of SARS-CoV-2  
527 from humans and a single, initial introduction (Figure 6). However, these differences vary  
528 depending on the size of the initial introduction and the scenario and uncertainty prevented high  
529 confidence in these differences. If an initial, single introduction resulted in 0.1% prevalence in  
530 any context, the average prevalence and incidence proportion were slightly greater than the  
531 average prevalence and incidence proportion when SARS-CoV-2 was continuously introduced.  
532 However, probability of persistence decreased in all scenarios except for wild deer in a rural  
533 setting, where probability of persistence would increase with this initial prevalence compared to  
534 when SARS-CoV-2 was continuously introduced. With an initial prevalence of 0.0001%, all  
535 scenarios showed median average prevalence and incidence proportion similar to or slightly  
536 lower than when SARS-CoV-2 was continuously introduced. The probability of persistence was  
537 consistent with those estimated for an initial 0.1% prevalence. Finally, with an initial prevalence  
538 of 1e-7%, the lowest tested, all scenarios showed decreases in average prevalence, probability of  
539 persistence, and incidence proportion relative to other continuous or initial infection conditions.  
540 However, even at this low level of initial infection, deer in the intensive facility scenario had  
541 median average prevalence and median incidence proportion that were comparable to when  
542 SARS-CoV-2 was continuously introduced, albeit with greater variability.

543

544 *3.5. Objective 5: Effects of fence line interactions between wild and captive deer on SARS-*  
545 *CoV-2 prevalence and persistence on either side of the fence*

546 When fence line interactions occurred between all combinations of captive and wild scenarios,  
547 wild deer had a higher prevalence and incidence proportion of SARS-CoV-2 during the fall  
548 projection compared to simulations without fence line interactions (Objective 2; Table 3). These

549 increases were highly variable depending on the captive and wild conditions. The probability for  
550 persistence did not increase for wild deer when fence line interactions occurred, and captive deer  
551 did not experience an increase in any metric (Table 3). Of the four systems, fence line  
552 interactions had the greatest effect when dividing captive deer in an intensive facility and wild  
553 deer in a rural setting. In this system during the 120-day projection, the average prevalence in  
554 wild deer increased by approximately 122% (median), and the incidence proportion of the wild  
555 deer in a rural setting increased from  $1e-5$  to 0.278 (median, Table 3). Smaller increases were  
556 estimated in the intensive facility and wild deer in a suburban system (Table 3). We estimated  
557 similar patterns when considering systems with fence line interactions between outdoor ranch  
558 facilities and wild deer, albeit smaller in magnitude (Table 3).

559

#### 560 4. Discussion

561

562 Our study demonstrates the potential for variable, yet widespread risk of SARS-COV-2  
563 introduction and spread across white-tailed deer populations in North America. Our findings  
564 indicated that the sociality of white-tailed deer and various environmental contexts may lead to  
565 sustained transmission. We estimated sustained infections in wild and captive populations across  
566 a wide range of infection risks from both continuous transmission from humans and an initial  
567 transmission event. We also demonstrated that wild deer may experience higher prevalence,  
568 incidence proportion, and persistence of SARS-CoV-2 infections when sharing a fence line with  
569 captive facilities. These results complement ongoing, retrospective surveillance efforts across a  
570 range of captive and wild contexts by revealing the spillover risk of SARS-CoV-2 from infected  
571 humans and the risk of transmission between deer. More broadly, our approach provides a

572 framework for using epidemiological modeling to evaluate the risks of outbreaks and sustained  
573 infections of SARS-CoV-2 and other zoonotic diseases in wildlife hosts in a variety of contexts.

574

575 Despite lower risks of introduction and transmission, SARS-CoV-2 was still able to transmit and  
576 sustain itself in wild scenarios. If  $R_0$  was less than one, indicating unsustainable transmission, our  
577 two wild scenarios did not have sufficient  $FOI_{HD}$  to sustain infections. However, when  $R_0$   
578 increased above one, wild scenarios showed rapid increases in average prevalence and incidence  
579 proportion, and a high probability of SARS-CoV-2 persisting into the future. Our findings  
580 generally match those reported by Hewitt et al. (2023), who used surveillance data from wild  
581 deer across the United States of America to estimate infection rates and prevalence, and  
582 estimated  $R_0$  greater than 1 in most of counties monitored across 27 states. In short, our results  
583 indicate that there may be broad circumstances where wild deer populations could face repeated  
584 introduction and sustained transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

585

586 Both captive scenarios showed a higher risk of introduction and a higher rate of transmission,  
587 resulting in higher prevalence and persistence relative to wild scenarios. Our findings conform to  
588 the available literature on the introduction and transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in captive  
589 populations. Roundy et al. (2022) reported 94.4% seropositivity for one captive herd and 0%  
590 seropositivity in two other captive herds, one of which housed axis (*Axis axis*) and fallow deer  
591 (*Dama dama*). This contrast could indicate a difference in transmission from humans, as  
592 stocking conditions may increase the transmission of the virus. Our study also indicated different  
593 epidemiological dynamics in systems where captive and wild deer may interact through fence  
594 lines compared to systems without these interactions. However, despite the vulnerabilities of

595 captive conditions to rapid transmission of SARS-CoV-2, we emphasize that the patterns of  
596 outbreaks in facilities and increased risk of fence line transmission are likely to vary through  
597 space and time. Our captive scenarios did not focus on single facilities with a particular herd  
598 size, but rather a pool of captive individuals. Introduction and transmission within individual  
599 facilities may be so rapid that a localized infection results in SARS-CoV-2 running out of  
600 susceptible hosts and the outbreak extinguishing itself. Spillover to wild populations through  
601 fence line interactions during localized outbreaks remain a risk for these individual facilities,  
602 though the risk of spillover from wild to captive facilities appears low.

603  
604 White-tailed deer encounter a wide range of conditions across North America making it  
605 challenging to capture this variability in a single analysis. The four scenarios evaluated here are  
606 indicative of processes typical of both wild and captive conditions. Our analysis focused on  
607 temporal patterns of SARS-CoV-2 introduction and spread across wild and captive white-tailed  
608 deer, yet spatial variation undoubtedly plays a role. We did not make our simulations spatially  
609 explicit, as we felt that our global approach met our objectives to better understand infection  
610 dynamics across typical conditions. Additionally, integrating a spatial component to this study  
611 would require specific spatial conditions and assumptions that either generalize across large  
612 geographic extents, or limit inferences to conditions in a specific locality. We feel these are  
613 important next steps given our inferences from this study and will aid in our understanding of the  
614 reported spatial and temporal heterogeneities of SARS-CoV-2 cases in white-tailed deer  
615 (Chandler et al. 2021; Kuchipudi et al. 2022; Willgert et al. 2022; Caserta et al. 2023).

616

617 We were required to make several assumptions in our parameterization of the SIRS models that  
618 may have influenced our inferences. First, we used Watanabe et al.'s (2010) reported infection  
619 probability for SARS-CoV in mice by intranasal exposure to estimate transmission of SARS-  
620 CoV-2 through fluid when deer make physical contact. We join other simulation studies that use  
621 this parameter estimate to calculate direct contact probability through fluid transfer and  
622 acknowledge the uncertainty of this parameter given it has not been quantified in the literature  
623 (Pitol and Julian 2021). Second, we used the stable-state equilibrium of the SIRS model to infer  
624 the persistence of SARS-CoV-2. We acknowledge that this assumes that parameter values are  
625 not stochastic and do not change past the simulated fall season. Seasonal changes in white-tailed  
626 deer behavior are well-documented and affect introduction and spread for multiple pathogens in  
627 deer, as with other host-pathogen systems (Altizer et al. 2006; Grassly and Fraser 2006; Williams  
628 et al. 2014). Third, parameters used to derive transmission risk between deer in our simulations  
629 did not vary by sex. Ongoing monitoring of SARS-CoV-2 in wild white-tailed deer populations  
630 indicate higher infection probability and seropositivity in male white-tailed deer, likely driven by  
631 sex-specific behaviors (Hale et al. 2022; Hewitt et al. 2023). We believe that our inferences are  
632 robust with our integration of uncertainty around derived parameter estimates and the patterns of  
633 prevalence and persistence values documented in multiple studies monitoring ongoing infections  
634 (McBride et al. 2023).

635

636 Despite a growing number of studies of SARS-CoV-2 in white-tailed deer, there is no consensus  
637 on how SARS-CoV-2 is introduced into deer populations. This is a key detail in mitigating the  
638 introduction and transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in a prolific wildlife species that can interact with  
639 humans in both wild and captive contexts. In this study, an initial outbreak had to infect less than

640 10e-7% of deer for there to be an observable decrease in average prevalence, incidence  
641 proportion, and probability of persistence compared to those observed during continual spillover.  
642 These results indicate that an initial introductory event, even at a low rate, could result in an  
643 outbreak in both captive and wild settings. While introduction through aerosolized transmission  
644 from humans to deer is presumed to be most probable, our findings indicate that indirect sources  
645 of infection could play a role through a single transmission event. Infection from contaminated  
646 fomites or wastewater could initiate an outbreak given sufficient dose received by an individual.  
647 However, further research remains into the risk posed by these sources.

648  
649 Sustained SARS-CoV-2 infections in this prolific wildlife species frequently interacting with  
650 humans in captive and wild settings creates a One Health challenge that affects human, animal,  
651 and ecosystem health. SARS-CoV-2 has demonstrated its ability to spread in wild and captive  
652 white-tailed deer populations across much of North America. The outbreak dynamics reported in  
653 this study indicate the ease by which the virus can be introduced and sustained in this non-human  
654 species. Surveillance studies indicate that multiple lineages of SARS-CoV-2 have been  
655 introduced and broadly circulated in white-tailed deer populations (Kuchipudi et al. 2022;  
656 Marques et al. 2022; Caserta et al. 2023), with evidence of spillback from deer to humans  
657 (Pickering et al. 2022; Feng et al. 2023). Our modeling approach provides a foundation to  
658 evaluate risks to human, animal, and ecosystem health posed by zoonotic diseases, and to test  
659 potential interventions to meet this and other One Health challenges.

660

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662

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669

## 670 6. Data availability statement

671

672 All code and generated data used in this study are available in the R software package  
673 whitetailedSIRS (Rosenblatt et al. 2023).

674

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680

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914

915 Figure Captions

916 Figure 1: Our study focuses on three stages of zoonotic spillover from humans to persistence in  
917 white-tailed deer. In each stage outlined above, we describe the stage, illustrate the concept, and  
918 define the metric we use to characterize each stage across multiple scenarios of deer in wild and  
919 captive environments. We consider the introduction of SARS-CoV-2 into white-tailed deer  
920 populations through aerosolized transmission from an infected human, quantified as the Force-  
921 of-Infection ( $FOI_{HD}$ ). Transmission occurs as an infected deer (orange circle) interacts with  
922 susceptible deer (gray circles), transmitting SARS-CoV-2 through aerosols and fluid over the  
923 course of the animal's infectious period ( $\gamma$ ). When the individual recovers from its infection  
924 (gold circle), it will have stemmed several secondary infections (orange circle), quantified as the  
925 basic reproductive number ( $R_0 = 4$ ). Depending on the magnitude of  $FOI_{HD}$  and  $R_0$  (dashed  
926 arrows), an outbreak of infections may occur across a deer population. Average prevalence in the  
927 Fall season is averaged across daily values (dark line) and incidence proportion can be calculated  
928 through the projected fall season (dotted line). This outbreak will either persist or fade  
929 determined by the deterministic steady state of the set of ODE equations considered in this study,  
930 referred to here as equilibrium (x-axis).

931

932 Figure 2: A conceptual diagram of the Susceptible-Infectious-Recovered-Susceptible (SIRS)  
933 epidemiological model used for this simulation study. Objectives that focused on specific captive  
934 or wild scenarios had no deer-deer fence line transmissions, preventing transmission between  
935 captive or wild populations. Objective 5 focused on how fence line transmission in captive-wild  
936 systems influence outbreak dynamics on both sides of the fence.

937

938 Figure 3: Box and whisker plots displaying variation in Force-of-Infection from humans-to-deer  
939 (FOI), probability of at least 1 human-to-deer (HtD) transmission per 1,000 individuals during  
940 the 120-day fall season, and basic reproductive numbers ( $R_0$ ) across the four scenarios  
941 considered in this study. Human Force-Of-Infection is log<sub>10</sub> transformed and presented as odds  
942 of HtD transmission per deer, per day. The basic reproductive number threshold between  
943 unsustained and sustained transmission from deer-to-deer is indicated with a horizontal line ( $R_0 =$   
944 1). Box plots depict the minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, and maximum, with  
945 outliers depicted as single points.

946

947 Figure 4: Box and whisker plots of average prevalence and incidence proportion during the 120-  
948 day fall projection in each scenario of interest, and the mean probability of SARS-CoV-2  
949 persisting at the equilibrium state of the Susceptible-Infected-Recovered-Susceptible (SIRS)  
950 ordinary differential equations (ODE) (with 95% confidence intervals). Box plots depict the  
951 minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, and maximum, with outliers depicted as single  
952 points.

953

954 Figure 5: The relationship between human-to-deer Force-of-Infection and (A) average SARS-  
955 CoV-2 prevalence, (B) persistence of SARS-CoV-2 at equilibrium in a deer population, and (C)  
956 the incidence proportion during the fall is dependent on the degree of transmission from deer-to-  
957 deer, quantified by the basic reproductive number ( $R_0$ ), or the number of secondary infections  
958 from one infected deer. Points indicate metrics for each iteration simulated, with point color and  
959 shading indicating a particular scenario. Fitted lines indicate trends in the data, fitted with a log-  
960 normal or logistic-regression for prevalence and persistence, respectively. Transmission

961 categories included unsustained transmission ( $R_0 < 1$ ), low, sustained transmission ( $1 < R_0 \leq 3$ ),  
962 medium, sustained transmission ( $3 < R_0 \leq 5$ ), and high, sustained transmission ( $R_0 > 5$ ).

963

964 Figure 6: Box and whisker plots of average prevalence and incidence proportion during the 120-  
965 day fall projection and the mean probability of SARS-CoV-2 persisting at the equilibrium state  
966 of the Susceptible-Infected-Recovered-Susceptible (SIRS) ordinary differential equations (ODE)  
967 (with 95% confidence intervals). Plots are faceted by scenario, with variation in outbreak  
968 characteristics displayed for continuous introduction from humans, and various degrees of initial,  
969 single introductions with no continuous introduction from humans. Box plots depict the  
970 minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile, and maximum, with outliers depicted as single  
971 points.

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973

Figures

Figure 1:

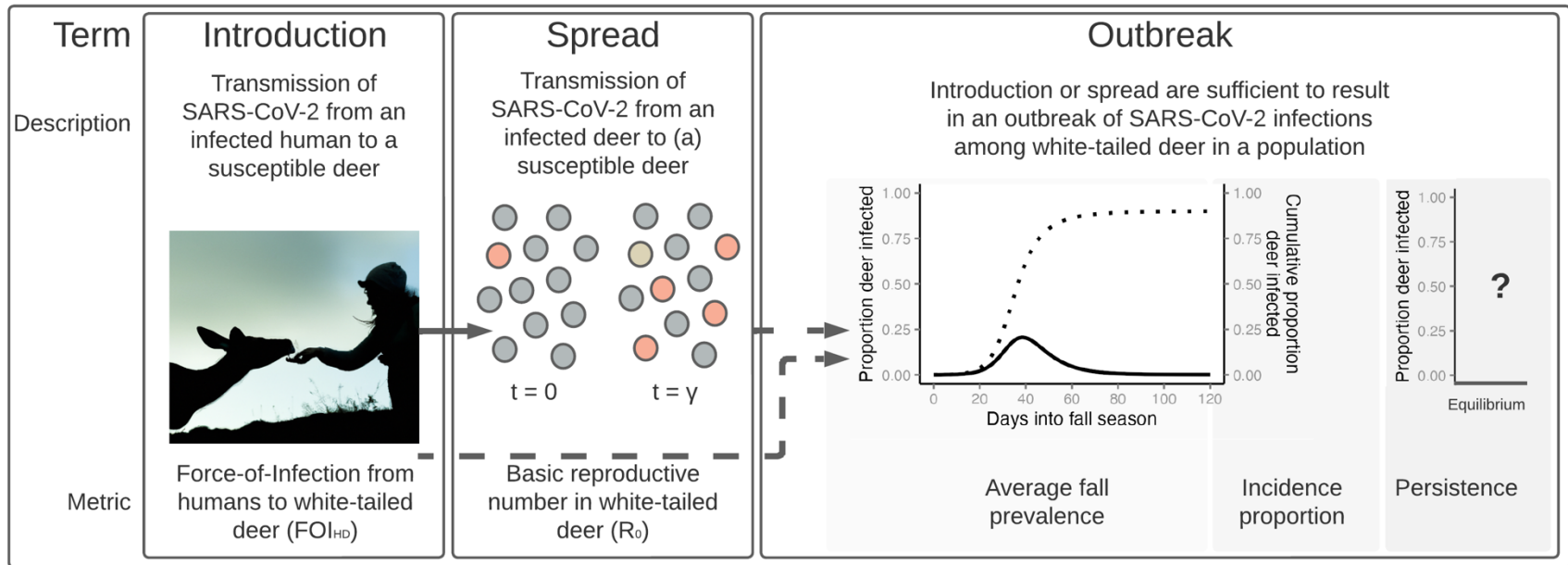


Figure 2:

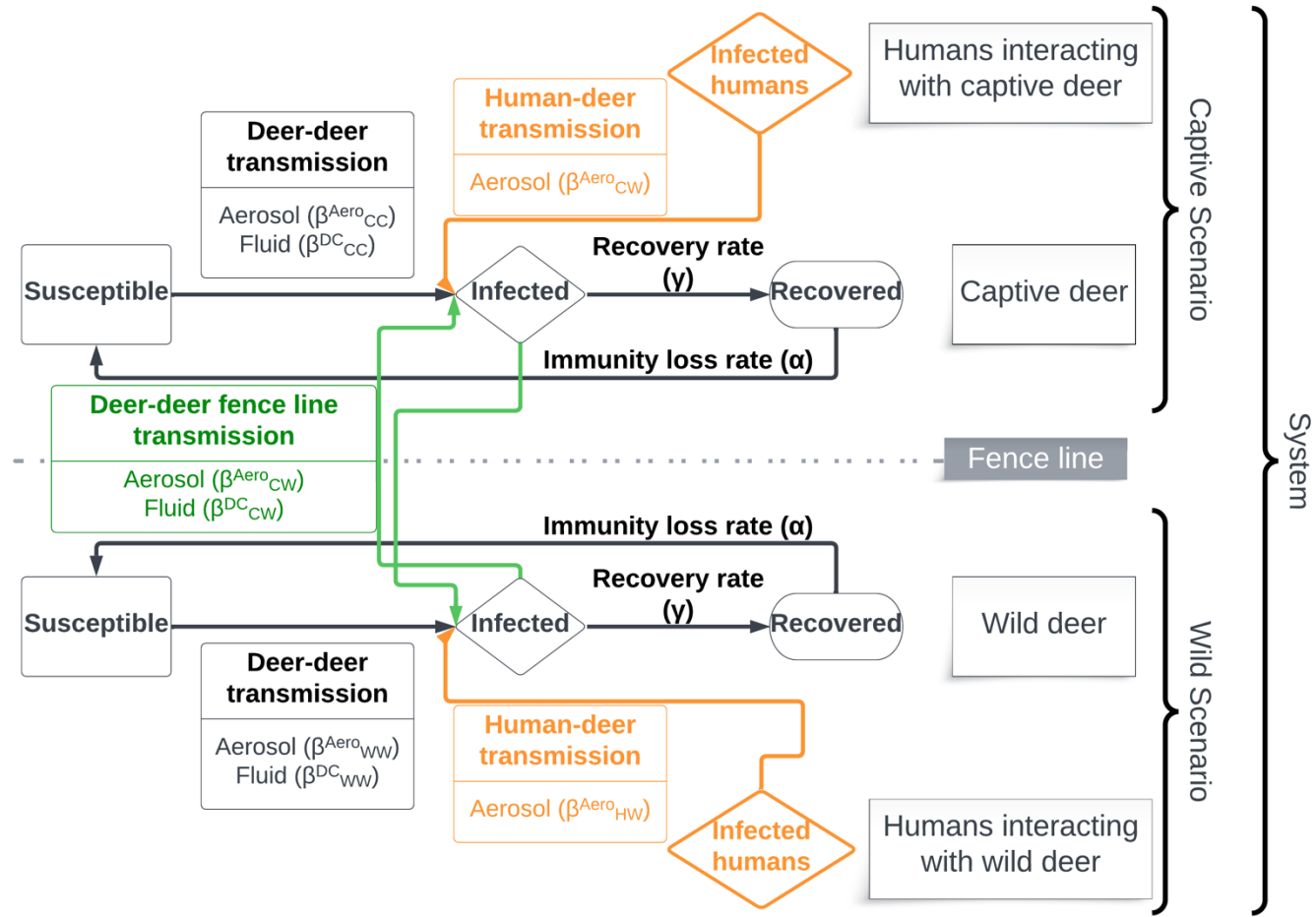


Figure 3:

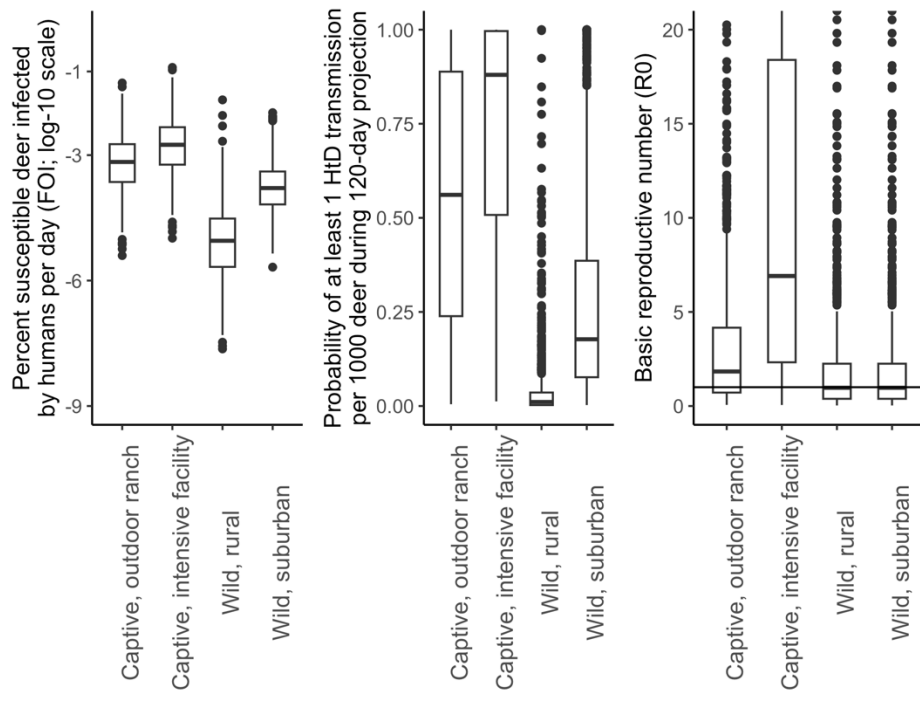




Figure 4:

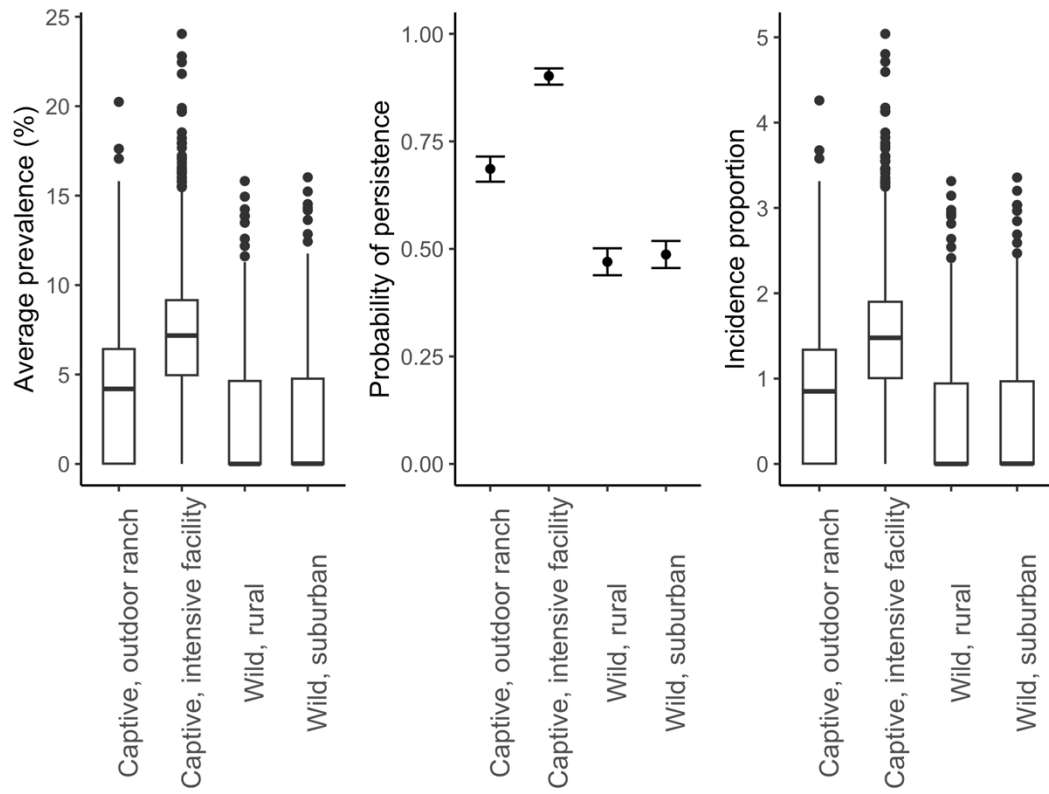


Figure 5:

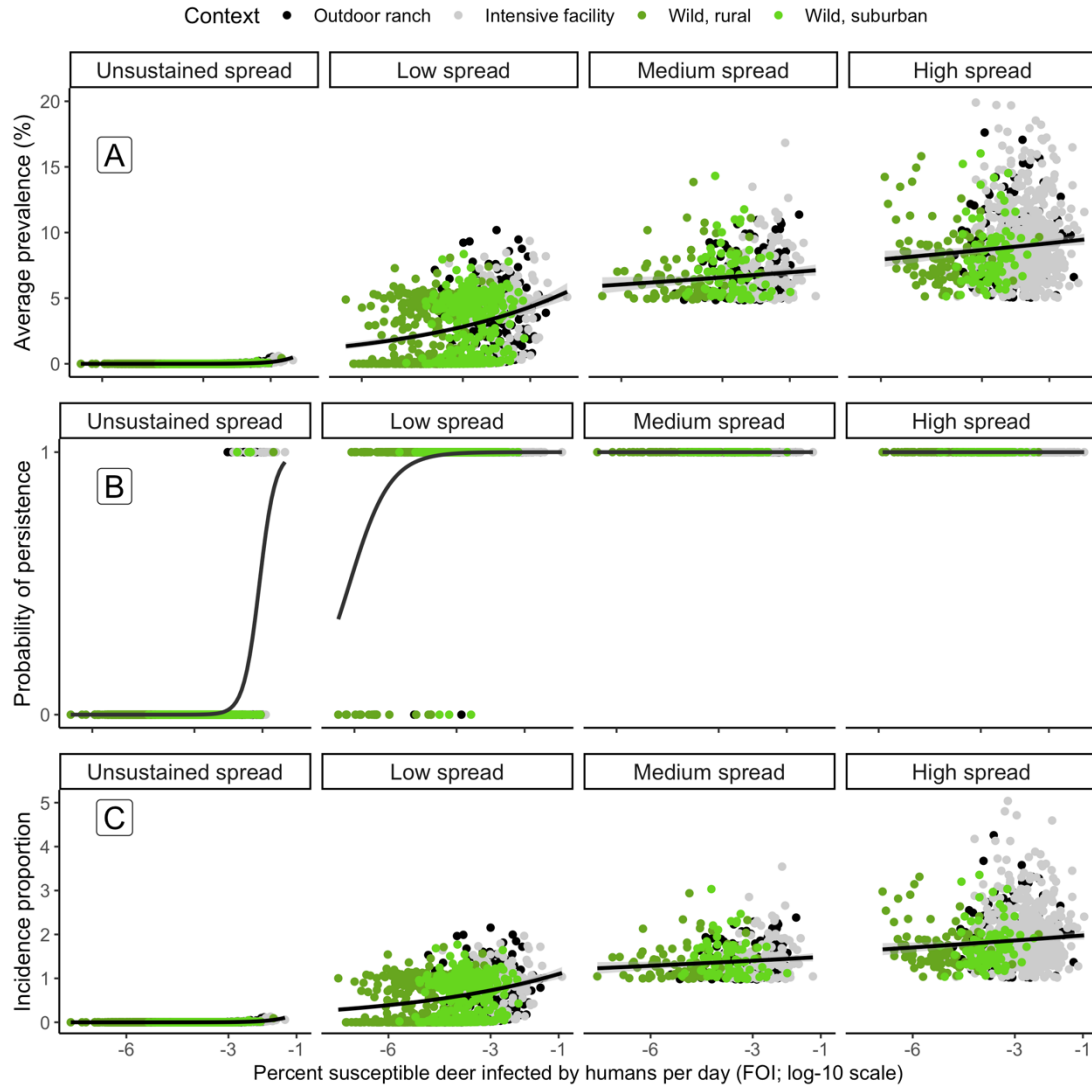
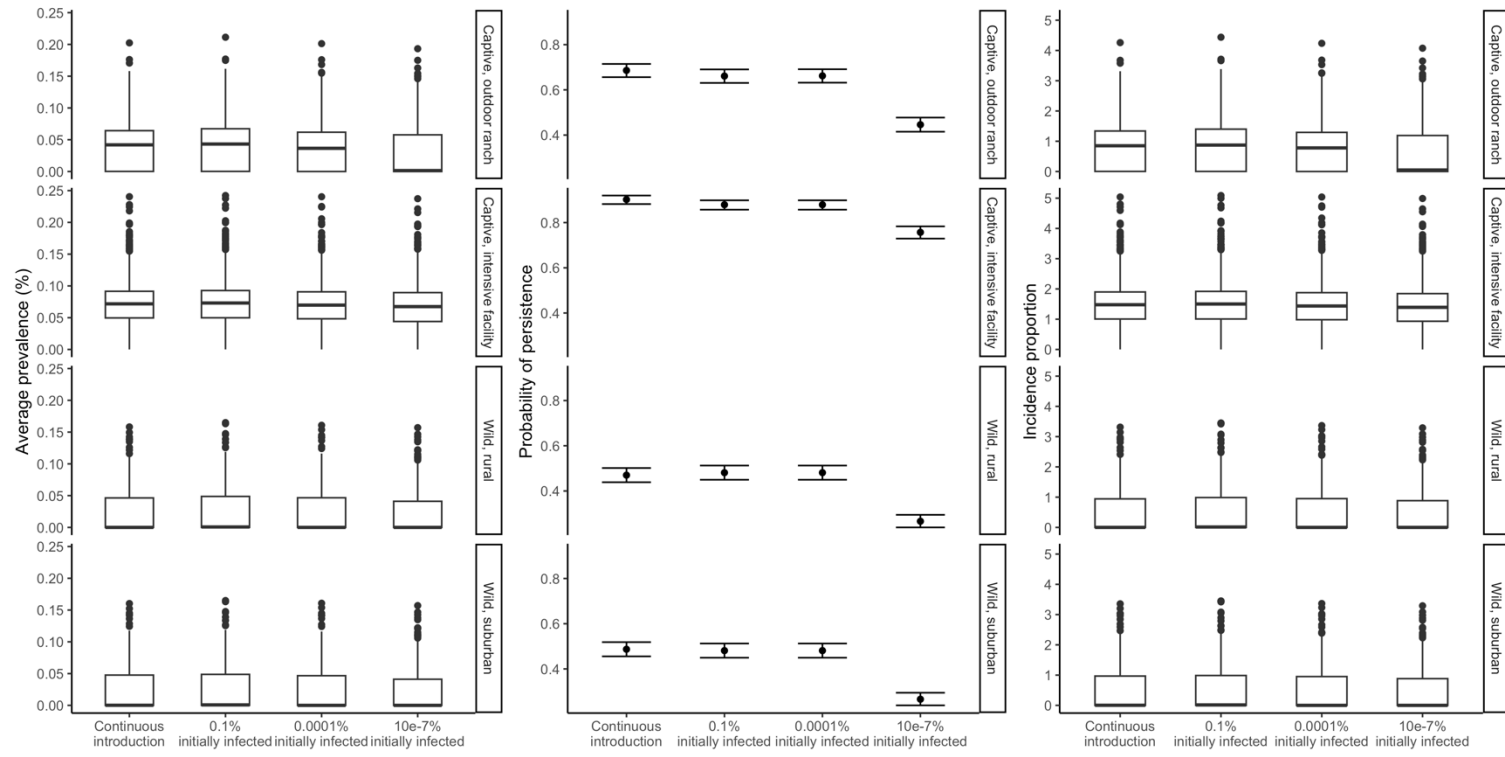


Figure 6:



## Tables

Table 1: Model parameter estimates for SARS-CoV-2 Susceptible-Infected-Recovered-Susceptible (SIRS) ordinary differential equations (ODE) for human-to-deer and deer-to-deer transmission and outbreak characteristics related to habitat or captive facility conditions, deer densities, and proximity rates with humans.. Equations refer to in-line equation numbers. Mean and standard deviation ( $\mu$  and  $\sigma$ ), along with error distribution are listed for expert-elicited estimates (Supplemental Materials). Parameters which do not apply to particular scenarios are indicated (NA).

Equations	Variable	Definition (units)	Captive		Wild		Source
			Outdoor ranch	Intensive facility	Rural	Suburban	
1, 3, 4, 6	$\alpha$	Immune loss rate (day <sup>-1</sup> ; log-normal)		$\mu = 4.72, \sigma = 0.63$			This study, expert elicited
2, 3, 5, 6	$\gamma$	Recovery rate (day <sup>-1</sup> )		1/6 days			Palmer et al. 2021
1, 2, 4, 5	$I_H$	Human Prevalence (%)		5%			Assumed and fixed
8	$\kappa$	Proximity rate scaling adjustment (unitless)	11.35	NA	11.35	11.35	Habib et al. 2011
8	$q$	Proximity rate concavity scaling constant (unitless)	0.34	NA	0.34	0.34	Habib et al. 2011
8	$N_w$	Number of deer per unit area ( $A_w$ )	1000	NA	1000	1000	Habib et al. 2011
8	$A_w$	Area for intermediate density-dependence (km <sup>2</sup> )	100 km <sup>2</sup>	NA	100 km <sup>2</sup>	100 km <sup>2</sup>	Habib et al. 2011
8	$\rho_{\text{attractant}}$	Adjustment for the presence of an attractant	$\mu = 3.47, \sigma = 0.23$	NA	NA	NA	This study, expert elicited

		(bait, feed, etc.; log-normal)					
-	$\omega_{HW}$	Human-deer proximity rate (events/120 days; log-normal)	$\mu = 0.57,$ $\sigma = 0.95$	$\mu = 2.52,$ $\sigma = 1.13$	$\mu = -1.59,$ $\sigma = 1.70$	$\mu = 0.572,$ $\sigma = 0.951$	This study, expert elicited
-	$\omega_{CC}$	Deer proximity rate in captivity (events/day; log-normal)	NA	$\mu = 3.47,$ $\sigma = 0.91$	NA	NA	This study, expert elicited
-	$\omega_{WC}$	Wild-captive deer proximity rate along fences (events/day, only included for Objective 4)	0.00072 direct contacts/day / $\sigma^{DC}$				Vercauteren et al. 2007; Khouri et al. 2022
9	$\theta$	Quanta SARS-CoV-2 dose-response in deer (1/quanta required for ID63; log-normal)	$\mu = 0.28, \sigma = 0.27$				This study, expert elicited
10	$C_i$	Conversion from SARS-CoV-2 RNA copies to quanta	0.0014 quantum/RNA copy				Mikszewski et al. 2021
10	$C_v$ - human	Concentration of SARS-CoV-2 in human sputum (RNA copies/ml)	$\mu = 5.6 \log_{10} \text{ RNA copies/ml}, \sigma = 1.2 \log_{10}$				Buonanno et al. 2020
10,14	$C_v$ - deer	Concentration of SARS-CoV-2 in deer sputum (RNA copies/ml; log-normal)	$\mu = 0.22, \sigma = 0.34;$ proportional to $C_v$ - human				This study, expert elicited
10	IR - human	Inhalation rate for humans, standing ( $\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ )	0.53 $\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$				Mikszewski et al. 2021

10, 12	IR - deer	Inhalation rate for deer, breathing ( $\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$ )					0.85 $\text{m}^3/\text{hr}$	Ranslow et al. 2014
10	$V_{\text{drop}}$	Droplet volume concentration (speaking; $\text{ml}/\text{m}^3$ )					0.01 $\text{ml}/\text{m}^3$	Mikszewski et al. 2021
11	$V_{\text{air}}$	Volume of shared airspace with 1.5m radius ( $\text{m}^3$ )					7.07 $\text{m}^3$	This study, calculated
11	AER	Air exchange rate ( $^{-\text{hr}}$ )	4 $^{-\text{hr}}$	1 $^{-\text{hr}}$	4 $^{-\text{hr}}$	4 $^{-\text{hr}}$		Gerken et al. 2017; Bannister et al. 2023
11	s	SARS-CoV-2 settling rate ( $^{-\text{hr}}$ )					0.24 $^{-\text{hr}}$	Buonanno et al. 2020
11	$\lambda$	SARS-CoV-2 inactivation rate ( $^{-\text{hr}}$ )					0.63 $^{-\text{hr}}$	Buonanno et al. 2020
12	$t_{\text{contact}}$	Duration of proximity event between human and deer (minutes; log-normal)	$\mu = 1.79, \sigma = 1.15$		$\mu = -0.36, \sigma = 0.98$	$\mu = 0.432, \sigma = 0.929$		This study, expert elicited
12	$t_{\text{contact}}$	Duration of proximity event between deer (all proximity types; minutes; log-normal)			$\mu = 1.55, \sigma = 1.27$			This study, expert elicited
13	$\varepsilon^{\text{DC}}$	Probability of deer making direct contact (logit-normal)					$\mu = -1.46, \sigma = 0.71$	This study, expert elicited
14	k	Dose-response function for plaque-forming units (PFU required for ID63)					410	Watanabe et al. 2010

14	$V_{\text{sputum}}$	Volume of sputum transferred between individuals on contact ( $\mu\text{l}$ )	100 $\mu\text{l}$	Fixed
14	$C_v - \text{deer}$	Concentration of SARS-CoV-2 in deer sputum (RNA copies/ml; log-normal)	$\mu = 0.22, \sigma = 0.34$ ; proportional to $C_v - \text{human}$	This study, expert elicited

Table 2: Median metrics and 80% confidence intervals for simulated SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks in white-tailed deer in four scenarios.

Metrics include: the proportion of susceptible deer infected by humans, per day (Force-of-Infection from humans-to-deer, FOI<sub>HD</sub>); the probability of at least 1 in 1,000 deer becoming infected from a human during the fall season (probability of human-to-deer transmission, p(HTD, 1:1,000)); the number of susceptible deer infected by an infected deer ( $R_0$ ); the average daily prevalence during the fall season (average prevalence); the total proportion of the population infected during the fall season (incidence proportion); and the probability of SARS-CoV-2 persisting beyond the simulated fall season (Persistence).

Scenario	FOI <sub>HD</sub>	p(HTD, 1:1000)	$R_0$	Average prevalence	Incidence proportion	Persistence
Intensive facility	0.0020%	88.0%	6.91	7.0%	148%	90%
	(2e-4 - 0.012%)	(23.4-100.0%)	(0.84 - 43.15)	(0.001 - 11.6%)	(0.01 - 243%)	(88.2 - 92.0%)
Outdoor ranch	0.0007%	56.1%	1.83	4.2%	85%	69%
	(1e-4 - 0.005%)	(9.7 - 99.7%)	(0.31 - 8.83)	(0.003 - 8.8%)	(0.06 - 183%)	(65.9-71.5%)
Wild, rural	<0.0001%	1.1%		0.001%	0.03%	47%
	(0-0.0001%)	(0.1-11.2%)	0.97	(0-6.6%)	(0-138%)	(43.9 - 50.2%)
Wild, suburban	0.0002%	17.7%	(0.17-4.36)	0.01%	0.30%	49%
	(0-0.001%)	(3.5-66.3%)		(4e-4 - 6.9%)	(0.01 - 142%)	(45.6 - 51.9%)



Table 3: Increases in prevalence, incidence proportion, and persistence of SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks with simulated systems with deer in captive (outdoor ranch, intensive facility) and wild (suburban, rural) scenarios interacting across fence lines. CI = confidence interval.

System	Median increase in prevalence (80% CI)		Median proportional increase in prevalence (80% CI)		Median increase in incidence proportion (80% CI)		Mean increase in probability of persistence (80% CI)	
	Wild	Captive	Wild	Captive	Wild	Captive	Wild	Captive
	Outdoor ranch and wild, suburban	0.002 (0-0.143)	0 (0-8e-4)	0.46% (0.01-104%)	0.0028 % (3e-4-0.0294)	0.044 (0-3.21)	5e-4 (0-0.016)	0.001 (1e4-0.004)
Intensive facility and wild, suburban	0.011 (0-0.522)	0 (0-1e-4)	11.25% (0.17-539%)	1e-04 % (0-0.003)	0.207 (2e-4-10.67)	0 (0-0.002)	0.006 (0.003-0.011)	0
Outdoor ranch and wild, rural	0.004 (0-0.557)	0 (0-8e-4)	4.47% (0.08-3094%)	9e-04 % (0-0.019)	0.081 (0-10.95)	1e-4 (0-0.016)	0.015 (0.010-0.021)	0
Intensive facility and wild, rural	0.014 (0-1.054)	0 (0-1e-4)	122.25% (0.75-19245%)	0 % (0-0.001)	0.278 (2e-4-20.42)	0 (0-0.001)	0.019 (0.014-0.029)	0