

Questions and Answers – CWD

What is CWD – Chronic Wasting Disease?

CWD is a neurological (brain and nervous system) disease of deer and elk known to occur in limited geographical locations in North America. The disease belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE). These diseases are caused by an abnormal form of a protein called a prion. In deer and elk there is no practical test of live animals to detect CWD and there is no known treatment or vaccine.

How is it spread?

It is not known exactly how CWD is spread. It is thought that the most common mode of transmission from an infected animal is via saliva, but feces, urine and possibly other body secretions may transmit the infectious prion. There is evidence that people moving live infected animals have spread the disease over long distances.

Is it dangerous to humans?

There currently is no convincing evidence that the agent of CWD affects humans. However, public health officials recommend that human exposure to the CWD agent be avoided as they continue to research the disease. This includes not eating meat from known infected animals or animals that appear sick.

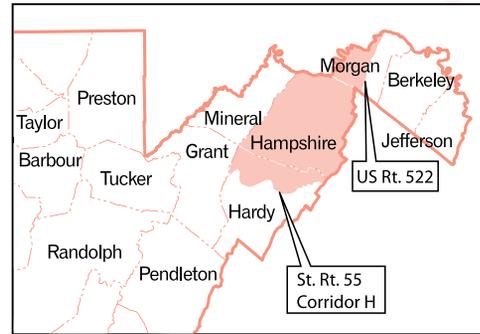
Where has it been found?

As of June 2012, CWD has been detected in free-ranging deer and elk in portions of Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, and Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada. In addition, CWD has been found in captive/farmed elk and white-tailed deer in Colorado, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada.

In West Virginia, CWD has been found in 112 white-tailed deer. Testing of road-kill deer in all WV counties has been continuous since 2002. The WVDNR, Wildlife Resources Section, in cooperation with the SE Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study at the University of Georgia and the Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory has tested over 13,800 deer from West Virginia for CWD and as of June 2012, the 111 Hampshire County deer and one Hardy County deer are the only animals found thus far to have the abnormal prion associated with CWD.

What is being done about the discovery of CWD in WV?

The discovery of CWD in Hampshire County, West Virginia, represents a significant threat to the state's white-tailed deer. The disease does not create an immediate widespread die-off of deer, but if allowed to spread, will cause long-term damage to the herd. The DNR is taking action to gather more information on the prevalence and distribution of the disease in the area surrounding all known infected deer. The DNR also discourages supplemental feeding and baiting of deer statewide, bans these practices on public land for a portion of the year, and also bans these practices anytime in Hampshire County, a portion of northern Hardy County and a portion of Morgan County. In addition there are restrictions on the disposal and transport of deer carcasses from within containment areas in WV (see WV CWD containment area), VA and MD where CWD has been detected. There are no proven solutions to combating CWD once present in free-ranging deer. Thus, future management actions will be adaptive and based on the findings of current and future surveillance.



WEST VIRGINIA Chronic Wasting Disease Containment Area:

Includes all of Hampshire County, that portion of Hardy County north of Corridor H and WV State Rt. 55 from Wardensville to the Virginia state line and that portion of Morgan County which lies west of US Rt. 522.

It is illegal to bait or feed deer or other wildlife in the "Containment Area" (see baiting and feeding regulations page?)

Hunters are prohibited from transporting dead cervids (deer, elk, etc.) or their parts beyond the boundary of the containment area except for the following: meat that has been boned out, quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached, cleaned hide with no head attached, clean skull plate (no meat or tissue attached) with antlers attached, antlers with no meat or tissue attached, and finished taxidermy mounts. Hunters may transport cervid carcasses that were not killed inside the containment area through the containment area.

What can hunters do?

- If you kill or observe a severely emaciated (very skinny) deer or a deer that is obviously sick, or a deer with an ear tag contact the WV DNR Wildlife Resources Section office nearest you.
- Do not feed or bait deer. These practices concentrate deer, increase the likelihood of spread of any disease present in the deer herd, and may introduce foreign contaminants via the feed or bait.
- Harvest adequate numbers of antlerless deer to maintain deer populations in balance with natural food supplies. A deer population in balance with available habitat is healthier and better able to fight diseases.
- Use caution in spreading urine based lures in the environment and avoid placing deer lures on the ground or on vegetation where deer can reach them. Placing them out of reach of deer still allows air circulation to disperse the scent.
- If you plan to hunt deer or elk in a state known or suspected to harbor CWD, follow that state's rules on removing animals from the area. Bring back only boned out meat or quarters and thoroughly cleaned skull plates and antlers. This applies to Virginia's CWD containment area and Maryland's CWD disease management area.
- If you hunt in Hampshire, Hardy, or Morgan counties, see special regulations regarding carcass transport and disposal, and baiting and feeding on page 12. Also, please cooperate with WVDNR requests for information and samples needed for CWD testing.
- If you observe live deer or elk being transported in a truck or trailer, notify your local DNR office as soon as possible.