

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Wisconsin's Wild White-tailed Deer Frequently Asked Questions about the Washburn County CWD positive deer plus additional CWD information.

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What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

CWD is a nervous system disease of deer, moose, and elk. It belongs to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) or prion diseases. CWD occurs only in members of the cervid or deer family, both wild and captive. It has been found in wild and captive deer and elk in 18 states and two Canadian provinces.

Where did the Washburn County CWD positive deer come from?

A 3 ½ year old doe was showing clinical signs consistent of a sick deer and appeared emaciated with the hair falling off. The doe was on a small parcel of private property west of Shell Lake. It was laying down and could be walked up to and touched. This deer was tested for CWD after being euthanized by the Sheriff's Office. Tests at the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the National Veterinary Services Laboratories have confirmed this deer had CWD.

What is the previous furthest north location for a wild deer to test CWD positive?

The previous furthest north location for a wild deer to test positive was a yearling doe within the CWD Management Zone in Sauk County. The distance between the locations of the Sauk County deer and the Washburn County deer is 186 miles.

Will additional wild deer be tested?

Yes, as has been done in similar situations, the department is conducting surveillance to better assess the extent of CWD in this location. Surveillance is targeted to adult deer within a 10-mile radius of this positive deer.

How will the additional sampling be done?

The surveillance will primarily rely upon obtaining tissue samples from hunter-killed deer during the 2012 hunting seasons. Hunters will be able to bring deer for disease testing to cooperating deer registration stations, meat processors and taxidermists. The specific location of these sampling stations will be available in mid-August. In addition, to supplement our hunter harvest sample collection we are working with local car-killed deer removal contractors; issuing permits to landowners willing to collect samples in advance of the 2012 deer season; as well as ongoing removal of any sick deer reported by the public.

Has any CWD surveillance been done in this area?

Yes, two rounds of CWD surveillance has been conducted in Washburn and surrounding counties. The first took place in 2002 following the first identification of CWD within Wisconsin. A second round of surveillance was completed during 2007 and 2008. No deer tested positive for CWD or TB (bovine tuberculosis) during these previous rounds of testing.

Specifically, during these previous two rounds of CWD surveillance in Washburn, Barron, Burnett, and Polk counties, a grand total of 3,683 wild deer have been tested. A breakdown by county is as follows: Washburn (1,105), Barron (784), Burnett (958), and Polk (836).

Will the deer feeding and baiting regulations change?

Yes, state law requires that a baiting and feeding prohibition be established for the entire county in which a CWD-positive game farm or free-ranging deer is found; the entire county prohibition also applies to any county falling within a ten-mile radius of the positive deer. Effective May 10th, 2012, a baiting and feeding ban is in effect for Washburn, Barron, Burnett and Polk counties.

Will the planned deer seasons for this fall change?

No, the deer seasons and antlerless quotas recommended for this fall will not be changed with the discovery of this CWD+ deer.

What should I do if I observe a deer that appears sick or is acting unusual?

Landowners and other persons within the 10-mile surveillance zone who observe a deer that appears sick and/or is displaying unusual behavior are encouraged to contact the department quickly. If the landowner or person is capable, the department will provide a verbal authorization to euthanize the deer. To contact the DNR call the info line at 1(888) WDNR INFO (1-888-936-7463).

During the fall hunting seasons, hunters who encounter a deer that appears sick are encouraged to harvest the deer. The hunter should attach a valid carcass tag and transport it to one of the DNR-designated sample collection sites. The hunter will then be issued a replacement tag. If a hunter does not have a valid deer carcass tag, they can contact DNR for verbal authorization to shoot the deer. At that time, the hunter will be instructed to bring the deer to one of the collection sites to have the deer tested.

How many deer samples would DNR like to collect?

We would like to collect at least 500 samples from adult deer within a 10-mile radius of the positive deer location. This number will provide a strong picture of the extent of the disease within this area.

What happened to the carcass of the sick deer?

The carcass was discarded on the Beaver Brook Wildlife Area. DNR regularly receives sick deer reports from outside the CWD zone. Whenever feasible, DNR attempts to get tissue samples from such deer for health testing. Until this deer, none had ever tested

positive for CWD outside the CWD Management Zone. In situations where DNR had the full deer carcass, it has been a standard practice outside the CWD zone for local field staff to dispose of such deer carcasses on nearby state lands to let nature take its course. On learning the Washburn County test results, Spooner field staff returned to the Beaver Brook Wildlife Area disposal site and cleaned up any remaining carcass remains. Staff also secured the approximate 20 by 60 foot area with temporary fencing. DNR has obtained advice from disease experts on remediation of the site. As a result, local wildlife staff will remove the top three inches of the soil in areas where the majority of remains were found and landfill the spoil. Hand crews will execute the plan to keep disturbance to a minimum. Temporary fencing will be installed until the site is fully vegetated and removed as soon as possible (August) at which point the site remediation will be considered complete.

Who else has DNR been working with on this situation?

Since this is the first positive CWD wild deer test result in the Ceded Territory, DNR has been communicating with tribal leaders and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). In addition, DNR has been in communication with local community leaders, USGS National Wildlife Health Center, Conservation Congress members, USDA Veterinary and Wildlife Services, and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

How are we including others interested in CWD in managing this disease locally?

The Department conducted a public informational meeting on CWD on April 23rd in Spooner. At this meeting, we received ideas on how to involve others. The DNR is working in the local community to form a citizen-based advisory team. This advisory team will not only advise on CWD management but also assist in involving the local community in CWD management. The DNR has also formed a local CWD Response Team that includes: Tribal Representation, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, DNR Wildlife Specialists, Conservation Wardens, Wildlife Health Specialists, and representation from the citizen-based advisory team. The DNR will be conducting additional informational briefings with the nearby St. Croix Tribe, local and county governments, and local School Districts. An e-mail distribution list will be developed to share information with those interested in receiving updates on the project. Prior to the fall hunting season, additional public informational meetings will be held in the local area.

Will the deer rehabilitation regulations change?

By administrative code, DNR can prohibit rehabilitating some wildlife species in certain areas of the state to protect against spreading disease, to protect public health, or to prevent harm to the environment. Current deer rehabilitation policy prohibits rehabilitating deer within 10 miles of any CWD or TB positive captive or free-roaming deer. Accordingly, since the Washburn County CWD-positive deer was within 10 miles of Barron, Burnett and Polk counties, the DNR has issued a deer rehabilitation ban now in effect for the entire four-county area.

The sick deer was shot last November, why did it take so long to learn about the CWD test results?

The deer was shot on the first day of deer gun season by a Washburn County Sheriff's Deputy after a sick-looking deer was reported. A conservation warden immediately took possession of the deer, affixed a metal, bar-coded tag to the ear and to the carcass. The warden also completed a data submission form with a matching bar code. According to protocols, the tagged head was delivered to Madison on December 8. Unfortunately, DNR wildlife health officials were unaware that the delivery occurred and the sample remained in a holding freezer in Madison until March 5 when the freezer contents were collected. The deer head sample was sent to the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (WVDL) on March 9th where it tested as a preliminary positive. Tissues from this deer were delivered to the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa on March 29 for independent lab confirmation. Both the State and National labs use the 'gold standard' CWD tests. The National lab results came back to DNR the evening of Friday, March 30. In the interests of no further delay, DNR released results on Monday, April 2. Sample collection procedures on the front and back end of the process were followed to the letter. DNR has implemented sample tracking procedures to assure the communication gap is not repeated.

What steps have been implemented in sample tracking and carcass handling procedures to assure the communication gap is not repeated, as well as, avoid delays in test results associated with sick deer reporting and response?

All reports of sick deer to WDNR staff are now being entered into the DNR's Necropsy Database within 24 hours of the report. This will allow Wildlife Health staff to see right away what samples have been collected for submission. The database will notify the CWD Processing Center Manager through an automated email of samples not yet submitted 10 days past the collection date so they can track those samples down.

Further, a transportation log will accompany the head from the point of collection to the CWD Processing Center and will be signed and dated by each person involved in transporting the head. Deer that are showing signs consistent with CWD from outside of a CWD Management Zone will be shipped to the CWD Processing Center within 5 days of collection.

Last, all carcass waste from deer for which samples are collected for disease testing will be landfilled.

What additional tests have been conducted on the deer?

Genetic testing has been done on tissues collected from the positive deer to determine if it was part of the local herd or perhaps related to deer in Wisconsin's CWD Management Zone. Genetics tests have confidently placed the deer with the northern wild deer population.

What is Wisconsin's plan for dealing with CWD in our wild deer herds?

The Natural Resources Board approved a 15-year CWD Response Plan in 2010 outlining the following goal: Minimize the area where CWD occurs and the number of infected

deer in the state. You can learn more about the Response Plan at dnr.wi.gov and enter search keyword “cwd”.

Why should people care about the disease?

As this newest CWD-positive test result demonstrates, CWD is a statewide issue. Projections based on current Wisconsin CWD data suggest that CWD will ultimately reduce the number of deer available each year for hunter-harvest. A healthy deer herd is important to our hunting heritage. Wisconsin has more than 600,000 deer hunters who regularly harvest 300,000 to 400,000 deer annually. Deer hunting provides more than 7 million days of recreation every year and annually generates more than \$500 million in retail sales and over \$1 billion in total impact to the state’s economy. A healthy deer herd is critical to the state's economy.

Does CWD pose a health risk to humans?

CWD has never been shown to cause illness in humans. For several decades CWD has been present in wild populations of mule deer and elk in western states. During this time there has been no known occurrence of a human contracting a prion disease from eating venison from a CWD infected deer. Additionally, here in Wisconsin, the incidence rate of Creutzfeldt Jacob Disease (CJD), the prion disease in humans, is detected at the same rate as in the rest of the world, about one in a million.

The Center for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services recommends that people not consume meat from deer that test CWD-positive. Some simple precautions should be taken when field dressing deer in areas where CWD is found including:

- **Wear rubber gloves** when field dressing your deer
- **Bone out the meat** from your deer
- **Minimize the handling** of brain and spinal tissues
- **Wash hands and instruments thoroughly** after field dressing is completed
- **Avoid eating** brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out of a carcass will essentially remove all of these parts)
- **Request that your animal is processed individually**, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your animal

How is CWD transmitted?

Current information indicates that CWD may be transmitted both directly through animal to animal contact and indirectly from a CWD-prion contaminated environment. Recent studies indicate that CWD prions exist in the saliva, urine, and feces of infected deer. Prions shed from an infected individual bind to the soil and can persist there for long periods of time.

If we let nature take its course, won’t deer become completely resistant to CWD?

Researchers have investigated for genetic resistance to this disease within white-tailed deer. Unfortunately, no white-tailed deer genotypes have been identified with complete resistance to CWD. Researchers have found an uncommon genotype that appears to

allow deer to survive longer with CWD than other genetic types, but they still eventually die from CWD. This research also implies that deer with this genotype also have more time to expose other healthy deer to CWD.

What should I do if I observe an orphaned fawn?

First and foremost, most fawns are not abandoned and the doe is probably nearby. Best policy is to leave the fawn alone and contact DNR for guidance. This is especially important as any captive wild deer from any county where deer rehabilitation is prohibited cannot be moved out of the county and must be humanely euthanized and tested for disease. Humane euthanasia can be performed by department staff, the local Police Department, a wildlife rehabilitator with an Advanced License, or a veterinarian. To contact the DNR call the customer service line at 1(888) WDNR INFO (1-888-936-7463).

Can CWD be transmitted to livestock?

To date, there has been no documented occurrence of livestock contracting CWD from free ranging deer or elk. Furthermore, in long-term studies where cattle have been housed in pens with CWD-infected deer, transmission has not occurred. And, even with experimental oral exposure to CWD, cattle did not develop the disease.

In studies where cattle were infected with CWD by direct injection into the brain, many of the cattle developed the prion disease. These experiments show that CWD can be transmitted to cows, but infection is highly unlikely via natural forms of transmission. There are similar findings from CWD infection studies with sheep and goats. Farmed deer and elk, however, are susceptible to CWD and farmed cervid CWD management is as important as wild deer CWD management in our state.