



Frequently Asked Questions

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

May 2015

What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)?

CWD is a neurological (brain and nervous system) disease found in deer, elk, and moose, otherwise known as cervids. The disease belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) or prion diseases. The disease attacks the brains of infected animals and produces small lesions that result in death. While CWD is similar to mad cow disease in cattle and scrapie in sheep, there is no known relationship between CWD and any other TSE of animals or people. For more information on CWD, please visit www.michigan.gov/cwd.

Where has CWD been found?

A total of 23 states and 2 Canadian Provinces have found CWD in either free-ranging or captive cervids or both. In Michigan, we had a confirmed case in August 2008 at a Kent County deer breeding facility, and now in a free-ranging deer in Ingham County in May 2015.

Where was the CWD free-ranging deer in Michigan located?

In April 2015, a female, six-year-old, free-ranging white-tailed deer in Ingham County was exhibiting symptoms consistent with CWD and was killed as part of an ongoing targeted surveillance. The deer was sent to DNR's Wildlife Disease Laboratory where, collaborating with Michigan State University's Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, it was identified as "suspect positive". The deer was confirmed on May 20, 2015 as positive by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa.

How is CWD transmitted?

Current scientific understanding suggests it may be transmitted both directly through animal to animal contact as well as indirectly through a contaminated environment. Previous studies have shown that CWD prions exist in the saliva, urine, blood, and feces of infected cervids. Additionally, a study from the University of Wisconsin suggests that the CWD prion can remain indefinitely in certain types of soil, and binding to soil dramatically increases the infectiousness of CWD prions.

Now that CWD has been found in Michigan, what are the DNR and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) doing?

The DNR and MDARD are following the steps outlined in the *Michigan Surveillance and Response Plan for Chronic Wasting Disease in free-ranging deer and privately owned cervid facilities*, which was developed in 2002 and revised in 2012 to address this nationally emerging disease. Since the development of the plan, MDARD and DNR have had a surveillance program in place to detect CWD in privately owned or free-ranging cervids.

As outlined in the plan, the following steps have or will occur now that a CWD case has been confirmed in a free-ranging deer:

- Completing a population survey in the area where the CWD-positive deer was found.
- Establishing a Core CWD Area consisting of Lansing, Meridian, Williamstown, Delhi, Alaiedon and Wheatfield townships in Ingham County; DeWitt and Bath townships in Clinton County; and Woodhull

Township in Shiawassee County. Mandatory checking of deer will be required in this area during hunting seasons and restrictions will apply to the movement of carcasses and parts of deer taken in this area.

- Creating a CWD Management Zone, which will include Clinton, Shiawassee and Ingham counties.
- Implementing a deer and elk feeding and baiting ban, which will include the Core CWD Area and the larger three-county CWD Management Zone.
- Prohibiting the possession or salvage of deer killed by collision with a motor vehicle within the Core CWD Area.

In addition:

- Research shows CWD-infected deer are more likely to be hit by vehicles because of their illness. DNR staff is working with local officials to collect fresh road-killed deer in the nine-township Core CWD Area surrounding the infected deer. Those deer will be sent to the DNR Wildlife Disease Laboratory for testing. Any road-kills found in this area should be called into the DNR Wildlife Disease Hotline at 517-614-9602. Leave a voicemail indicating location, and staff will pick up carcasses on the next open business day.
- The DNR is working with Meridian Township officials to develop a plan that removes a significant number of deer for testing within 2 miles of the positive animal.
- MDARD will conduct enhanced surveillance through testing, record keeping, and fence checks for 60 months on all privately owned cervid facilities within a 15-mile radius of where the infected deer was discovered.

Landowner and hunter assistance and cooperation

- Within the nine-township Core CWD Area:
 - There will be a ban on baiting and feeding of deer.
 - Unlimited antlerless deer hunting licenses will be available.
 - Only deboned meat, hides, antlers, cleaned caps, etc., will be allowed to be transported out of this area, unless a lab result is received that indicates CWD was not detected. Otherwise, the carcass must be dropped off at a licensed processor within 72 hours of transport.
 - Mandatory checking of deer will be required during deer seasons to test for CWD in harvested deer.
 - Disease control permits will be handed out in this area to landowners willing to help with surveillance. Antlerless deer licenses will be discounted for both residents and nonresidents. The area will be eligible to be hunted during the early antlerless deer season.
 - All road-kill deer will be collected and tested for CWD.
 - Possession of a deer killed by collision with a motor vehicle will be prohibited.
- Within the three-county CWD Management Zone:
 - There will be a ban on baiting and feeding of deer.
 - Antlerless quotas during hunting season will be increased to help reduce the population to help prevent deer-to-deer spread of the disease.
 - An early antlerless deer season will be added.
- Additional deer-check stations will be established in the Core CWD Area and the CWD Management Zone to accommodate hunters.

Possession of any live free-ranging deer is illegal. Taking an unhealthy deer from the environment and attempting to rehabilitate it has the potential to increase the spread of CWD by bringing infected deer into contact with other

deer in rehabilitation centers, and contaminating those facilities with CWD. Rehabilitation of deer in the CWD Management Zone is prohibited.

What do I do if I've already bought 2015 deer licenses that I can't use/don't want to use?

- Consider hunting with your licenses in another DMU.
- Licenses and combos can be returned for a refund and new licenses can be purchased prior to the start of the deer seasons.
- After September 19, the licenses are considered "used" and cannot be returned.

How do I dispose of a deer harvested in the area?

- Hunters processing deer harvested in the 9-township area should dispose of the leftover parts in their garbage or a landfill. Leftover parts from an infected deer, especially heads and backbones, contain CWD prions and if discarded on the landscape those prions can persist for decades.

Does CWD pose a health risk to humans?

CWD has never been shown to cause illness in humans. For more than two decades CWD has been present in free-ranging populations of mule deer and elk in Colorado. During this time, there has been no known occurrence of a human contracting any disease from eating CWD infected meat. However, public health officials recommend that people and domestic animals not consume meat from deer that test CWD-positive. Some simple precautions should be taken when field dressing deer in the CWD Management Zone:

- 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 consuming 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 can CWD be treated and controlled in wildlife?

There is currently no treatment for CWD; it is fatal in all cases. CWD transmission can be minimized by limiting contact between infected and non-infected animals. Feeding and baiting bans are one of the only practical ways to limit that contact.

The DNR and MDARD are working to maintain the integrity of Michigan's white-tailed deer, elk, and moose herds. Surveillance, cervid importation restrictions, and required CWD testing of suspect animals continue to be the key to CWD control.

Why should people outside of the CWD Management Zone care about the disease?

A healthy white-tailed deer population in Michigan is important. Chronic wasting disease is a statewide issue for the following reasons:

- Chronic wasting disease can spread through the deer herd.
- All deer infected with CWD die from the disease.
- Established CWD could significantly reduce the number of deer in Michigan and/or significantly depress older age classes, especially mature older-aged bucks.
- White-tailed deer are native to Michigan and it is important to preserve our native wildlife.
- Any regional threat to a healthy deer population is a statewide concern.

- A healthy deer herd is important for hunting traditions. Michigan has more than 650,000 deer hunters who have harvested an average of 430,000 deer annually during the past decade. Deer hunting contributes more than 10 million days of recreation every year.
- Deer hunting annually generates more \$2.3 billion annually to Michigan's economy. A healthy deer herd is critical to the state's economy.
- Without appropriate management within the current CWD Management Zone, the disease may spread to other areas of the state.

How can you tell if a deer has CWD?

Infected animals may not show any symptoms of the disease for a long period of time, even years. Nevertheless, they are infectious to other cervids. In the later stages of the disease infected animals begin to lose bodily functions and display abnormal behavior such as staggering. Animals may have an exaggerated wide posture, or may carry the head and ears lowered. Infected animals become very emaciated (thus wasting disease) and will appear in very poor body condition. Infected animals will also often stand near water. Drooling or excessive salivation may be apparent. Note that these symptoms may also be characteristic of diseases other than CWD.

What should I do if I see a deer that shows CWD symptoms?

You should accurately document the location of the animal and immediately call the Report All Poach (RAP) Line (1-800-292-7800). Do not attempt to contact, disturb, kill, or remove the animal.

For more information about how Michigan is working to prevent CWD from infecting Michigan's free-ranging cervid populations and control CWD in deer and elk facilities, see the Emerging Diseases Web site and in particular the *Michigan Surveillance and Response Plan for CWD of Free-ranging and Privately Owned Cervids Plan* at www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.