

Michigan United Conservation Clubs

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P.O. Box 30235

2101 Wood Street

Lansing, MI 48909-7735

Phone: 517/371-1041

FAX: 517/371-1505



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MUCC Calls for Hunter Cooperation on CWD Crisis

LANSING, MICH – One of Michigan’s greatest fears has been realized.

On Monday, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture (DOA) confirmed that a captive white-tailed deer has tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), a deadly neurological disease that affects deer, elk and moose.

Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), Michigan’s largest and oldest conservation organization, began an immediate investigation after the tragic announcement late yesterday. MUCC members who establish the organization’s policy positions have previously adopted resolutions supporting the fair and equitable phasing-out of captive cervid facilities in addition to a statewide baiting ban, positions also supported by the DNR. MUCC policy points to preventative disease control in wildlife populations at the focal point of the baiting/cervid farm debate.

“The discovery of a CWD-positive deer in Michigan is not a warning shot across our bow, it is a direct hit that could be a potentially lethal blow to this state’s proud hunting heritage and our state economy,” said MUCC President Bill Krepps. Krepps commended the DNR for initial response efforts but remained cautiously concerned about the positive identification of CWD in Michigan. “CWD is a hazardous threat that hunters must take seriously - diseases are scary and dangerous things. But instead of reacting negatively, now is the time to work together to insulate our deer herd from further spread of this horrible disease. In order to protect our current and future hunting heritage, Michigan hunters must stop baiting and feeding deer to prevent CWD and other diseases from not only infecting other animals, but to ensure a proper long-term scientific management of our herd.”

The DNR’s early response included immediate activation of its CWD contingency plan, which includes a ban on baiting and feeding of deer and elk in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula, a ban on transportation of deer and a quarantine of captive cervid facilities. Additionally, hunters who harvest deer in the department’s surveillance “hot zone” in the Kent County townships of Tyrone, Solon, Nelson, Sparta, Algoma, Courtland, Alpine, Plainfield, and Cannon will be required to participate in a deer check.

CWD is a fatal neurological disease that cannot be detected with live animal tests. As such, the department will also kill and test 300 deer within the “hot zone.” According to the DNR, the response

plan is designed to prevent potential spread of the disease. ([Click here](#) to download the DNR response plan for CWD or visit www.michigan.gov/dnr)

In the meantime, MUCC scheduled an emergency meeting with DNR Director Becky Humphries and Michigan's Conservation Coalition for late Tuesday afternoon to discuss implications of the CWD discovery and address forward action to minimize or prevent its spread. Michigan's Conservation Coalition is an alliance of sportsmen groups that are unified to protect five priority areas of the hunting, fishing, trapping, and conservation community: Sportsmen's Heritage, Long Term Funding, Habitat and Access, Hunter/Angler Recruitment and Retention, and the Prevention of Invasive Species.

Deer hunting is big business in Michigan where an estimated \$500 million is generated each year by the state's firearms deer season which runs from Nov. 15-30. The state is home to nearly one million deer hunters and has a proud hunting tradition that spans over a century. However, if CWD were to find its way into the state's wild deer populations, that heritage and revenue could be in serious jeopardy.

The impact of CWD and eradication efforts on the state's economy and hunting traditions could be immense. Neighboring Wisconsin, where CWD was discovered in a wild white-tailed deer in 2002, has contributed to a 10 percent decrease in hunting license sales, and efforts to eradicate deer from the Wisconsin CWD area have fallen woefully short. Worse yet, a deep wedge has been driven between the hunting community and wildlife managers over the handling of the disease.

Who will pay the price if CWD spreads beyond game fences into our wild herds? Sportsmen and Sportswomen. In Wisconsin, roughly \$32 million was spent in 2005 to combat CWD, \$26.8 million of which came from the state's DNR – monies generated directly from license fees that sportsmen and sportswomen pay, which is diverted from wildlife management.

"This is a very serious disease with serious implications," said MUCC Executive Director Muchmore. "We must do what we can now and hope we haven't missed the opportunity to minimize the effect that CWD can have on our wildlife population due to these cervid farms. MUCC is remaining cautiously optimistic that the steps being taken will hold this disease in check, but in the meantime we're keeping a keen eye on the management of this crisis to ensure the smallest possible impact on our treasured natural resources."

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Contact:

Dave Nyberg, Resource Policy Specialist

(517) 346-6462

Amy Spray, Resource Policy Specialist

(517) 346-6484

About MUCC

Michigan United Conservation Clubs has been Michigan's first voice for Michigan's out-of-doors since 1937. With over 45,000 members and 400 affiliated clubs throughout the state, MUCC's primary objective is *Uniting Citizens to Conserve, Protect, and Enhance Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoor Heritage.*