

Chronic Wasting Disease in Michigan

Frequently Asked Questions

On August 25, 2008, The Michigan Departments of Agriculture (MDA) and Natural Resources (DNR) confirmed the state's first case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in a three-year old white-tailed deer from a privately-owned cervid (POC) facility in Kent County.

This document includes:

- Definitions and Background Information on CWD
- History of Kent County Case and Action Steps
- Information for Hunters and Wildlife Watchers
- For More Information

Definitions and Background Information on CWD

What is a privately-owned cervid (POC) facility?

Cervid species means members of the *Cervidae* family including, but not limited to, deer, elk, moose, reindeer, and caribou.

A privately-owned cervid facility is a privately-owned cervid livestock operation on privately-controlled lands capable of holding cervid species. This does not include accredited zoos or public institutions. POC facility operations may involve the producing, growing, propagating, using, harvesting, transporting, exporting, importing, or marketing of cervid species or cervid products under an appropriate registration.

POC facilities are required to be licensed under Public Act 190 of 2000, the Privately Owned Cervidae Producers Marketing Act. This law establishes standards governing privately-owned cervid livestock facilities, requiring the registration of cervid livestock facilities and establishing a regulatory and inspection process. The regulatory function has been transferred to the DNR, while the animal health and testing functions are performed by the MDA. In addition, MDA determines import and movement requirements, including issuing quarantines. This act outlines registration and reporting requirements, construction standards for facilities, and requires that facilities keep and maintain records of production, purchases, or imports.

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. In the later stages of the disease, however, infected animals begin to lose bodily functions and display abnormal behavior such as staggering or standing with very poor posture. 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 and

will consume large amounts of water. Drooling or excessive salivation may be apparent. Note that these symptoms may also be characteristic of diseases other than CWD.

If you see a deer exhibiting these symptoms, you should accurately document the location of the animal immediately and call the Rap Line (1-800-292-7800). Do not attempt to contact, disturb, kill, or remove the animal.

How is CWD transmitted?

Current evidence suggests that the disease is transmitted through infectious, self-multiplying proteins (prions) contained in saliva and other fluids of infected animals. Susceptible animals can acquire CWD by direct exposure to these fluids or from contaminated environments. Once contaminated, research suggests that soil can remain a source of infection for long periods of time, making CWD a particularly difficult disease to eradicate.

Is CWD a risk to human health?

To date, there is no evidence that CWD presents a risk to humans. However, the World Health Organization has recommended that people and other animals not eat deer or elk that have been infected with CWD.

Some simple precautions should be taken when field dressing deer in the surveillance zone (from Wisconsin DNR):

- 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.

What other animals could be at risk?

CWD is a fatal neurological disease that affects deer, elk and moose. Research suggests humans, cattle, and other domestic livestock are resistant to natural transmission.

History of Case and Action Steps

How did officials find out about the infected deer?

The deer that tested positive at the Kent County breeding facility was a doe that had been recently culled by the owner of the facility because it was showing signs of sickness. Michigan law requires sick deer or culled deer on a POC facility be tested for disease. The samples from the Kent County deer tested "suspect positive" at Michigan State University Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health, and were then sent to

the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, which confirmed the test results.

How did this deer catch CWD?

Officials do not yet know how the deer may have contracted the disease. The doe was born at the Kent County facility. DNR and MDA staff are currently reviewing records from the Kent County facility and at least five others to trace deer that have been purchased, sold or moved by the owners in the last five years. They will also be tracing elk that have been purchased, sold, or moved by the owners in the last seven years.

What are the immediate steps being taken within the privately-owned captive cervid (POC) industry?

The state has quarantined all POC facilities, including game ranches, prohibiting the movement of all privately-owned deer, elk, or moose—dead or alive. This is in addition to the current law that has prohibited importation of live cervids from out of state. The Michigan State Police and county sheriff's offices have been notified to step up surveillance efforts on Michigan's roads and highways to ensure that there is no movement of cervids in violation of the quarantine.

The Kent County facility where the deer was found has been depopulated and all carcasses will be tested. In addition, the other POC facilities that have received cervids from or sold cervids to the Kent County facility are being examined for signs of CWD.

What are the immediate steps being taken to protect the free-ranging wild deer herd? (See specific questions below for more details)

- A ban on baiting and feeding white-tailed deer has been put into effect for the entire Lower Peninsula of Michigan, along with increased enforcement efforts.
- A nine- township surveillance zone has been established in Kent County
- Mandatory deer checks within the CWD surveillance zone in Kent County to test for CWD.
- Deer carcasses acquired within the CWD surveillance zone may not be moved out of this zone
- At least 300 deer must be tested within the surveillance zone and another 300 will be sampled in the rest of Kent County and all counties bordering Kent County to help determine if there may be CWD in the wild deer herd.
- The rehabilitation and possession of live deer has been banned statewide

Information for Hunters and Wildlife Watchers

Why is there a ban on baiting and feeding deer and elk throughout the whole Lower Peninsula? What does this mean?

Michigan established a Surveillance and Response Plan for CWD in 2002. This contingency plan said that for any positive identification of CWD in Michigan (or within 50 miles of Michigan's border), that the DNR Director shall issue an interim order to ban baiting and feeding within the affected peninsula.

CWD Frequently Asked Questions (MUCC, updated 8-29-2008)

Baiting and feeding unnaturally congregate deer into close contact, thus increasing the transmission of contagious diseases such as CWD and bovine tuberculosis. Transmission can occur from contact between animals, contamination of feed or water sources with saliva, urine, and/or feces, or contact with an infected facility or area. More rarely, an adult animal can transmit CWD to its offspring through direct contact.

Provisions of the baiting ban are:

- All grains, minerals, salt, fruits, vegetables, hay, or any other food materials, whether natural or manufactured, which may lure, entice or attract deer are prohibited. This ban does include mineral and salt blocks, but does not include natural or manufactured lures/scents that are not “food materials”.
- Food plots are not subject to the ban.
- Foods found scattered solely as the result of normal agricultural planting or harvesting practices, foods available to deer through normal agricultural practices of livestock feeding if the area is occupied by livestock actively consuming the feed on a daily basis, or standing farm crops under normal agricultural practices are not subject to the ban.
- Baiting is defined in the Wildlife Order as placing, depositing, tending, distributing, or scattering bait to aid in the taking of a deer.
- All counties in the entire Lower Peninsula are subject to the baiting ban.
- The Upper Peninsula is not included in the ban.

Does this ban include other forms of animal baiting or feeding?

BEAR: As a result of the deer and elk baiting and feeding ban, no bear baiting with food materials other than meats, meat products, fish, fish products, or bakery products will be allowed in the Lower Peninsula at any time.

SONG BIRDS: Feed used in bird feeders should be provided in a way to make the grains inaccessible to deer.

Where is the surveillance area?

There are special restrictions for hunters taking deer within the townships within a five mile radius of the Kent County facility. This surveillance zone includes Tyrone, Solon, Nelson, Sparta, Algoma, Courtland, Alpine, Plainfield, and Cannon Townships, all in Kent County. A map can be found here:

http://www.michigan.gov/images/dnr/surveillance_zone2_246836_7.jpg

Why are there mandatory deer checks in the surveillance zone?

At this point there is no live-animal test, no treatment and no vaccine for CWD. By the end of the 2008-2009 deer hunting season, the DNR must test at least 300 deer in the surveillance zone to perform adequate surveillance of the free-ranging white-tailed deer herd for CWD. Hunters can assist the DNR by allowing biologists to take samples from the deer they harvest, which will reduce the number of live deer needed to be taken by the agency for testing. The department will also be testing recent road kills.

CWD Frequently Asked Questions (MUCC, updated 8-29-2008)

What are the movement restrictions on free-ranging deer taken in the surveillance zone?

To prevent unintentional spread of CWD, the only parts of deer harvested in the surveillance zone that will be allowed to be transported out of the zone are boned meat, capes, and antlers cleaned of all soft tissues.

There are no movement restrictions on free-ranging deer taken in other parts of the state.

Deer taken at a game ranch or privately-owned captive cervid facility under quarantine are not allowed to be transported out.

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 Rap Line (1-800-292-7800). Do not attempt to contact, disturb, kill, or remove the animal.

For More Information

If you have questions in addition to those above, please send them to Amy Spray at muccpolicy@mucc.org. We will be updating this Frequently Asked Questions document as needed.

MUCC has a webpage devoted to information on CWD at:
<http://www.mucc.org/cwd/cwd.php>

More information on CWD is available on Michigan's Emerging Diseases Web site at www.michigan.gov/chronicwastingdisease.

CWD in Wisconsin (from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources)
<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/whealth/issues/CWD/>