

Frequently Asked Questions:

Deer tests positive for chronic wasting disease in Dickinson County

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What is chronic wasting disease? Chronic wasting disease is a fatal nervous system disease found in animals of the family Cervidae, including deer, moose and elk. The disease attacks the brain of infected animals, creating small lesions, which result in neurologic symptoms. The disease is always fatal to animals that contract it. To date, there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in humans. Find out more at michigan.gov/cwd.

How can cervids get CWD?

CWD can be transmitted through direct animal-to-animal contact, or by contact with saliva, urine, feces, blood, and infected water, carcass parts of an infected animal, infected plants or infected soil.

What is the status of CWD in the Upper Peninsula? A 4-year-old doe has tested positive for chronic wasting disease. The deer was killed in Dickinson County's Waucedah Township on a deer-damage shooting permit in September on an agricultural farm, about 4 miles from the Michigan-Wisconsin border. This event marks the first confirmation of chronic wasting disease in the Upper Peninsula.

Is the DNR banning deer baiting and feeding in this area? There are no current plans to ban baiting for the rest of 2018. The DNR will reserve a decision on feeding deer, pending the results of surveillance efforts. In addition, the DNR will discuss possible future response actions with U.P. hunters and other stakeholders to determine the best approach to fighting the disease in the region.

Is a mandatory deer check being established in the area? Not at this time. The DNR's primary focus for response is stepped-up testing and active surveillance to determine the extent of potentially infected deer. Mandatory deer checks may be required if enough heads are not collected for testing through voluntary deer checks and other means of collection, like road-killed deer.

How many deer heads does the DNR need? Based on population estimates in the area, the DNR needed to test a minimum of 600 deer heads to determine the extent of CWD infection within a roughly 10-mile area set up around Waucedah Township in Dickinson County. The DNR is also testing at least 300 heads from a wider CWD management surveillance area. These minimum goals were surpassed during the 2018 firearm deer hunting season. The DNR will still test deer heads submitted by hunters.

How can I help? Keep hunting and get your deer checked. Responsibly transport, process and dispose of your deer carcass. Find out about maintaining only proper carcass transportation into Michigan from out of state. Please pass these tips on to other hunters. Visit michigan.gov/cwd to learn more.

Where can I get my deer checked? Deer may be checked, and the heads submitted for testing, at several locations. A listing is available at michigan.gov/deercheck. The DNR will be providing additional drop boxes for deer heads within the area, especially in convenient, high-traffic places.

Are we supposed bring the head wrapped or seal it in a plastic bag? Should each head be kept separate or placed in separate bags for each deer to minimize cross-contamination? The likelihood of cross contamination is extremely small. Still, it is best if submitting multiple heads to have each one individually wrapped in a bag to further reduce any remote chance of cross contamination. If the entire deer is brought in, the likelihood of cross-contamination is virtually nonexistent since the samples tested are at the base of the head and protected by the cape and muscle tissue of the animal.

Are other surveillance measures being taken? Yes. To help gather enough deer heads for testing, the DNR is offering disease control permits to interested landowners who have more than 5-acres of land and are within 5-miles of the center of the surveillance area. In addition, an ongoing DNR U.P. deer migration study has been adjusted to include the affected area within its boundaries. Deer will be collared in the area to better understand their seasonal movements.

What does a CWD deer look like? Infected animals may not show any symptoms of disease for a long period of time, even years. The latter stages of the disease in infected animals include loss of coordination, changes in behavior such as a loss of fear of humans or awareness of surroundings, loss of body condition and excessive drooling and salivating.

What should I do if I find a dead deer or visibly very sick deer? There are a few options available. 1.) Accurately document the location of the animal. Contact your local DNR office to report it or after business hours contact the Report All Poaching hotline at 800-292-7800. If the deer is essentially immobile, it can be put down by a DNR conservation officer. If the animal is still mobile, a site visit will depend on staff availability, but is unlikely, especially if a long time has passed since observing the deer. 2.) A hunter can harvest the animal as legal game based on the stipulations available to them on their hunting license and season. If the deer does test positive, a replacement license will be provided. 3.) If a picture is available, getting written permission from a DNR biologist can serve as permission to harvest the animal. Note that the entire animal will have to be submitted to the DNR, but a license does not have to be used to take this animal.

Is it safe to eat meat from CWD positive deer? How can we be sure there is no cross contamination in meat processing? It is not recommended to eat the meat from known CWD infected animals. Hunters located in CWD areas are advised to debone their meat and not to consume parts where prions will likely accumulate.

What should I do with the carcass? Off-site disposal (preferred): Take directly to an appropriate landfill or use your regular trash pick-up that will be taken to the landfill. On-site disposal: If necessary to bury carcass, do as close to the kill site as possible and deep enough to prevent scavengers digging it up. This method does not prevent future infections on that location but minimizes the chance of moving CWD prions across the landscape to areas that have not been infected.

The Hunting Digest speaks to disposing of carcass parts in an approved landfill. The question has come up, what's an "approved" landfill?

There is no formal definition of "approved" landfill, though one that is lined would be preferable. The intent of this language is that any landfill that is used by residential or commercial refuse companies would be preferred, rather than a shallow hole in the back yard. Knowing that not every refuse service will collect carcass parts, the DNR is offering dumpsters at DNR facilities where hunters can dispose of leftover deer carcasses.

Where can I check my deer?

Locations include DNR deer check stations, partnering meat processors and taxidermists, and DNR drop boxes. More information can be found at michigan.gov/deercheck.

If I submit my deer head for testing, how long does it take to get test results back?

Depending on the time of the year, test results may take 7 to 14 business days.

Do we take the full deer (head intact), with the properly attached deer kill tag, to the check station or just the head (e.g., hunter removes the head)?

The DNR will cut heads off deer that come in to check stations. Hunters can bring in just the head, if they wish, but for the reasons listed below, it is best to have everything together.

If we bring only the head, then which portion of the deer keeps the kill tag, the body or the head, and how do we transport the other without the kill tag attached?

The tag stays with the carcass for possession/processing. If the head is missing from the carcass and a conservation officer can't identify the sex of the animal, then questions arise if there is not a stub or proof that the animal was submitted for testing at the check station. With proof of submission, suspicion decreases. We know this has been an issue in the past and are working on ways to remedy this, but the standard recommendation is to bring the entire animal to the check station, or if just transporting the head after the meat has been processed, bring the tag along with the head.

Must the head be turned in during office hours of the designated station (for purposes sample tagging) or will there be drop boxes?

Check stations will have posted hours. Drop boxes are available for use at any time. Instructions for submission will be provided, but it's worth the hunter knowing or being able to answer when the animal was harvested, exact location-preferably the county, township, range and section, phone number and contact info of the submitting hunter.

Will meat processors within or outside of the core/management areas be allowed to process these deer before the lab results are returned or should processing wait until after results are determined?

Processors make their own decisions on how to process venison. Some wait to process until test results are returned, others move forward with processing in the absence of a testing result. Each decision is personal to the processor, and we expect each hunter to have this conversation with their chosen processor to make sure their values align with the path the processor takes in processing venison.

What can I bring back if I'm hunting cervids (such as deer, elk, or moose) out of Michigan?

You can only bring back hides, deboned meat, quarters or other parts of the cervid that do not have any part of the spinal column or head attached, finished taxidermy products, cleaned teeth and antlers attached to a skullcap cleaned of brain and muscle tissue. If you are notified by another state or province that a deer, elk, or moose you brought into Michigan has CWD, contact the [DNR Wildlife Disease Laboratory](#) within two business days at 517-336-5030 to provide details.

What are the impacts of CWD? There is no treatment or recovery; it is always fatal. CWD on the landscape could significantly reduce the number of deer and/or depress older age classes, especially mature bucks. Therefore, CWD could negatively impact Michigan's hunting traditions. Michigan has about 600,000 deer hunters who harvest about 430,000 deer annually. Hunting

generates more than \$2.3 billion annually to Michigan's economy. Without management of CWD, disease may spread across the state.

Where has CWD been found in Michigan? Since May 2015 when the first free-ranging CWD deer was found, CWD has been confirmed in deer from Clinton, Ionia, Ingham, Jackson, Kent, Montcalm and Dickinson counties. CWD was also found in captive deer in Kent (2008) and Mecosta (2017) counties. Without appropriate management, the disease may spread to other areas of the state.

Is CWD transferable to cattle, pets, livestock, and other animals? Only members of the deer family are known to be naturally susceptible to CWD. Natural transmission to other animal species has never been documented.

Where did CWD first originate? Although the origin of CWD is unknown, it was first recognized in captive mule deer at wildlife research facilities in Colorado during the late 1960's. CWD was not actually identified as a Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy or TSE until the 1970's.