

**ALABAMA DIVISION OF WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER
FISHERIES**

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

RESPONSE PLAN



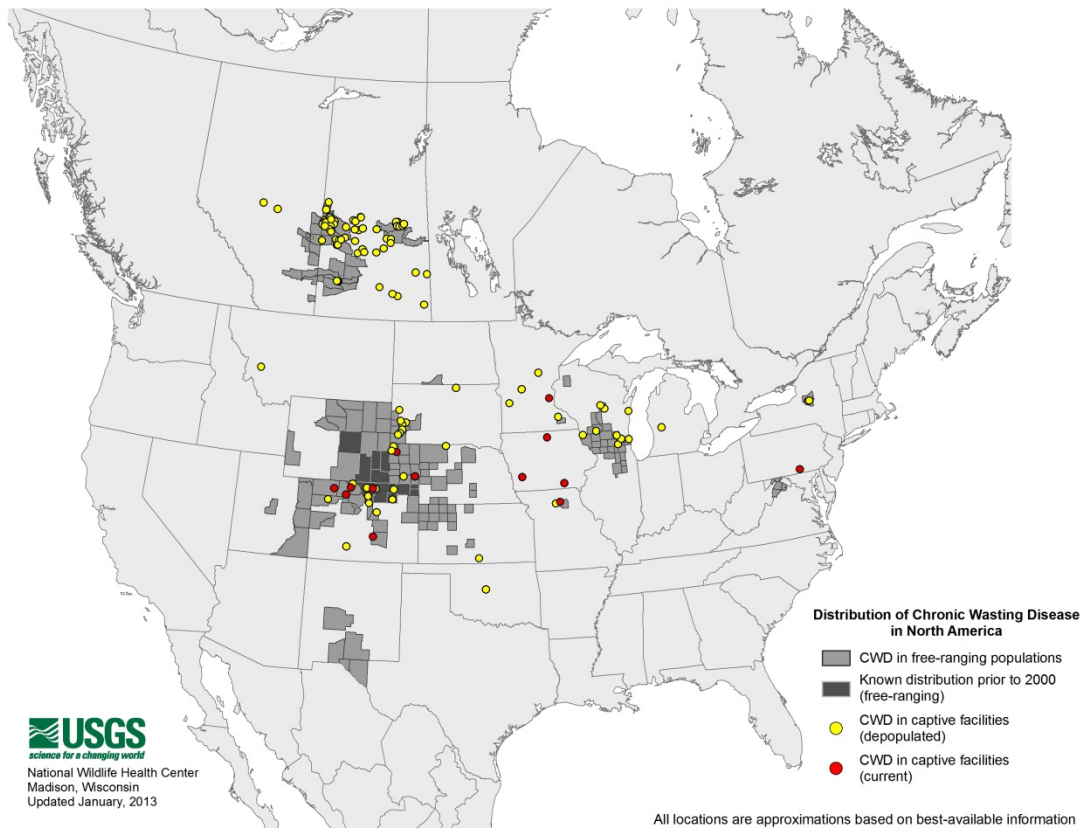
May 2013

Overview of Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease of deer, elk, and moose that has been classified in the group of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). These diseases are believed to be the result of infectious, self-propagating “prion” proteins. Infectious prions are normal cell proteins whose shape has been transformed in such a way that they cause disease. Although considerable research by wildlife health officials is ongoing, the overall biological and epidemiological understanding of CWD remains poor. Chronic wasting disease is closely related to TSEs in other species including Scrapie in sheep, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy in cattle, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease and new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in humans. It is unclear how CWD originated, however, there are two hypotheses that may explain its existence. First, it is possible that CWD arose from Scrapie which has been recognized as a TSE of sheep since the 1940s. Second, CWD could simply be a TSE that spontaneously arose in deer.

The disease attacks the central nervous system of the deer, elk, or moose and presents symptoms including extreme weight loss, excessive salivation, odd behavior, and poor coordination. The disease is **infectious, communicable and always fatal**. CWD is insidious and has a prolonged incubation period of at least 2 years or longer. **No practical live animal test has been developed** and diagnosis must be made by testing brain or lymph node tissue from a dead animal using immunohistochemistry or enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay. **No effective treatment or vaccine for the disease is known.**

CWD was first recognized as a disease syndrome in 1967 in captive mule deer at a wildlife research facility in Fort Collins, Colorado. It was recognized as a TSE in 1978. CWD was diagnosed in free-ranging deer and elk in the 1980s. To date, CWD has been diagnosed in free-ranging or captive cervids in 22 states and 2 Canadian provinces including: Alberta, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Commercial movements of captive cervids appear to have exacerbated the spread of the disease in captive and possibly in free-ranging deer, as well.



There are two primary sources of exposure to CWD for uninfected deer: 1) CWD infected deer, and 2) CWD contaminated environment. It is believed that some TSE prions may appear spontaneously and sporadically, but there is no evidence of spontaneous CWD. The presence of infected deer over time increases the number of infectious CWD prions in the environment. As CWD becomes established in an area, environmental contamination may become the primary source of exposure for uninfected deer. Conversely, in areas where CWD is not established, and where the environment is relatively uncontaminated, direct animal contact is considered the most likely source of transmission of CWD to uninfected deer. Experiences in Minnesota and New York indicate limiting the growth of environmental contamination through the reduction of infected individuals in the early stages of infection may offer some control in limiting disease prevalence and distribution. However, infected individuals on the landscape serve as a reservoir for prions which will be shed into the environment. Prions are shed from infected animals in saliva, urine, blood, soft-antler material, and feces. There are no known management strategies to mitigate the risk of indirect transmission of CWD once an environment has been contaminated with infectious prions. This makes eradication of CWD very difficult, if not impossible, in areas where CWD has been established for a long period before initial detection.

Although a variety of species can be experimentally infected with CWD, there is currently no evidence that the disease can be spread naturally from cervids to livestock. No case of human disease has been epidemiologically associated with CWD. **Examination of the available data has led the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to conclude that there is no scientific evidence of CWD**

infecting humans. However, as a precaution, the WHO recommends people or other animals eat no part of a deer or elk diagnosed with CWD.

Overview of Alabama's Response to CWD

Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) personnel have been monitoring for CWD since 2002 with uniformly negative results. Due to events in Wisconsin, WFF initiated sampling efforts in the winter of 2002 to include active surveillance of otherwise healthy hunter-killed deer. This approach was expanded in 2003 and 2004, with samples collected from all 67 counties.

Active surveillance for CWD in Alabama continued through the 2011-12 hunting season. To date, WFF has sampled and tested over 5,300 white-tailed deer from Alabama, with no CWD detected in those samples. In August 2012, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funding that had supported WFF's CWD testing program from 2002 through 2012 was eliminated. This greatly reduced the ability of WFF to actively sample hunter-harvested and road-killed deer for CWD testing. Future surveillance efforts will focus on target animals unless a CWD positive deer is identified in Alabama or within 50 miles of Alabama's border. Target animals are at least 12-months old or older with CWD-like symptoms, which can include extreme weight loss, excessive salivation, odd behavior, and poor coordination.

Plan Goal

The following management plan will serve to guide WFF in addressing risks, developing management strategies, and protecting wildlife resources from CWD in Alabama's deer populations. WFF recognizes the need for full cooperation and partnership among government agencies, conservation organizations, private landowners, hunters, and the general public should CWD occur in Alabama. WFF has regulatory authority for free-ranging deer and captive deer held under the authority of Game Breeder's Licenses.

This management plan is intended to be dynamic; management strategies described within are likely to change as both the epidemiology and management of this disease become better understood through time. Specific response plans may be developed and incorporated into this plan following local or regional discoveries of CWD. Three major goals of this CWD management plan are:

1. Minimize CWD risks to deer populations in Alabama.
2. Establish and maintain support for prudent CWD surveillance or containment with hunters, landowners, and other stakeholders.
3. Minimize direct and indirect impacts of CWD to hunting, hunting related economies, and conservation in Alabama.

General Response to a Confirmed CWD Detection

If CWD is identified in Alabama, or within 5 miles of the Alabama border, WFF's CWD Response Plan outlines the agency's management activities that will determine the prevalence and geographic extent of the CWD infection and control transmission of the disease. Thus far, CWD management actions in other states have not eradicated CWD from free-ranging deer populations. Consequently, this plan is designed with the goals of containing or slowing the spread of the disease. Eradication, while desired, is not the primary goal for free-ranging deer.

A. General Response for Detection within Alabama:

1. While CWD has potentially serious consequences, there is currently no evidence that it has been transmitted to humans and domestic animals. Consequently, it is important that the response to an outbreak of CWD is in proportion to the health risks and economic impact the disease poses.
2. Upon receiving notification of the first CWD positive sample within Alabama from a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approved laboratory, WFF will advise the Governor's Office, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Commissioner's Office, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAI) State Veterinarian, and the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) in Athens, GA that a preliminary positive case of CWD has been found in Alabama and that back-up samples are being tested for confirmation at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory or other independent USDA-approved laboratory. Confirmation may take several days from the initial positive CWD case notification. If the positive case is not confirmed, the Governor's and Commissioner's offices will be notified along with the State Veterinarian and SCWDS. No further actions will be taken.
3. If the positive case is confirmed by a second, independent, USDA-approved laboratory, WFF will notify the DCNR Commissioner's Office, the ADAI State Veterinarian, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), USDA Area-Veterinarian-In-Charge, SCWDS, and USDA Wildlife Services immediately. If back up samples for confirmatory testing are not available then the case will be considered a true positive.
4. Concurrently, intradepartmental notification will begin proceeding down the divisional chain of command. The Supervising Wildlife Biologist for the District in which the CWD positive case has been found will be informed of the situation. Also, the DCNR Information and Education Section will prepare a press release and obtain approval from the WFF Director and DCNR Commissioner.
5. Concurrently, the WFF Director or his designees will make calls to key constituency/stakeholder groups, including surrounding Southeastern states, appropriate federal agencies, legislators, and local community officials where the CWD positive case was found, to inform them that CWD has been identified in Alabama.

6. Within 24-48 hours of confirmation of a case within Alabama, the media will be advised of the positive CWD case through a DCNR press release. The press release will include media packets providing background information on CWD, a synopsis of Alabama's CWD Response Plan, Alabama's CWD surveillance efforts, an outline of likely CWD response management actions, and other CWD-related materials deemed needed or appropriate to the particular facts at the time. When practical, press releases (sample attached) will be prepared ahead of time to aid in their timely delivery.
7. A CWD response management team will be assembled under the direction of WFF, to include other agencies and outside experts as needed. WFF personnel should include the Wildlife Section Chief or designee(s), Law Enforcement Section Chief or designee(s), appropriate District Wildlife Section and Law Enforcement Section Supervisors or staff, the Deer Studies Project Leader, and the media relations coordinator. This team will guide the operational response and will also determine the research and data needs necessary to effectively manage the outbreak. The management team will ensure this research is conducted and incorporated into the management actions. Research projects may be contracted as deemed appropriate and necessary.
8. A limited number of WFF staff members (to include a Wildlife Section designee and the media relations coordinator) will be assigned as WFF CWD media contacts through which all CWD-related questions from the public and the media would be routed, including public appearances and interviews. These persons will comprise the Division's CWD media relations committee. The media relations committee will be established through coordinated efforts with the WFF Director, DCNR Commissioner, and Governor.
9. Current regulations allow for appropriate disease containment measures. Pursuant to Code of Alabama 1975, Section 9-2-8, the Commissioner of DCNR is authorized to make and promulgate such reasonable rules and regulations not in conflict with the provisions of the game and fish laws as he may deem for the best interest of the conservation, protection, and propagation of wild game. Such rules and regulations shall have the effect of law. This authority includes, but is not limited to, designation of mandatory CWD testing surveillance areas, extended deer seasons and increased bag limits, special designated CWD check stations, prohibition of deer rehabilitation and deer feeding, prohibition of carcass transportation, and implementation of necessary depopulation of captive cervids, fence security, and quarantine of cervid facilities.
10. WFF will place up-to-date information on the DCNR Website in order to fully inform citizens on CWD and the WFF CWD Response Plan. The information will be reviewed and updated routinely.

B. Response for Free Ranging Deer within Alabama:

The primary objective of the response efforts will be to determine the prevalence and geographic extent of CWD infection in the free ranging deer population. In the event a CWD infected free ranging deer (i.e., the index case) is identified, the following management actions will be implemented as rapidly as possible:

1. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will be used to map the exact location of the index case. A five-mile radius circle (79-mi² area) will be drawn around the index case. This area will be designated as a CWD Surveillance Area (CSA). The CSA will be delineated to contain as much of the 79-mi² area as possible using county and/or state maintained roads or other geographic features and will be located with the goal of collecting a representative sample of the deer herd. The CSA approach will allow intensive spot sampling to occur in representative areas if needed. The area within this circle will be reviewed to identify sites conducive to intensive sampling of deer if additional testing is needed. Parameters such as deer density, accessibility, land ownership, and safety will be considered in order to identify where sampling would be most efficient.
2. The deer herd will be assessed within the CSA in order to develop an estimated population size. This estimate will be used to determine the relationship between a given sample size of any collected deer and the corresponding degree of certainty that any additional infected deer have been identified. Thus, as the sample size increases, there will be a corresponding increase in confidence that additional positive deer will be detected, if present.
3. WFF staff will assess the need to begin collecting samples from free ranging deer within the CSA using various methods (e.g., road-kills, controlled shooting, hunter-harvested animals, etc.) with controlled shooting by trained government teams considered the last resort. This assessment may show that adequate sampling has occurred. The assessment also may identify areas where additional sampling could occur. If possible, landowner permission will be obtained prior to collecting/testing any deer on private property. All collection locations will be recorded using GPS coordinates and transferred to the DCNR GIS database.
4. If additional infected deer are detected in the CSA, a new five-mile radius boundary will be extended and sampling will be conducted at newly identified CSA's within the expanded area(s). As sampling progresses, a CWD Infection Zone (CIZ) will be identified using all available biological information and cultural/geographic features.
5. Targeted surveillance for CWD will be intensified within all counties immediately adjacent to the CIZ. This surveillance will focus on road killed deer and hunter-harvested deer taken during the regular hunting season. Mandatory hunter check-in may be required during certain hunting seasons to allow WFF to operate Check Stations to take CWD samples from harvested deer. Deer processors will be asked to cooperate by saving portions of deer carcasses for testing by WFF staff during all or selected portions of the deer hunting seasons. Shooting deer by government employees is not expected to be necessary except in those cases where samples are not otherwise obtainable.

6. Mandatory CWD testing may be implemented for hunter-harvested deer taken within the CSA when the WFF is operating a Check Station in the area. This requirement will be instituted within and surrounding the CIZ as determined by WFF.
7. If captive deer facilities are present within the CIZ, WFF and ADAI personnel will inspect these facilities immediately following confirmation of CWD in the CIZ and then on a regular basis thereafter. Per current requirements, all captive deer that die in captivity will be tested for CWD. Facility operators will be required to check the integrity of the perimeter fencing on a regular basis.
8. If no additional positive cases are detected for a period of one year then targeted surveillance for CWD will be continued for four additional years in all counties adjacent to, and containing the CIZ. The CIZ will be considered CWD-free when no new cases have been found for five consecutive years.
9. If additional CWD infected free ranging deer are found, the CIZ will be extended as necessary. If new cases are sufficiently distant from the existing CIZ, a new CIZ will be established and the response plan implemented as per a new area.
10. An adaptive management approach will be employed to determine how long to continue surveillance if the CIZ area does not remain CWD free for a period of five years.
11. If additional infected animals are identified, WFF will initiate a comprehensive program to educate citizens on how to adapt to having CWD in the environment.

C. Response for Captive Deer within Alabama:

In April 2013, there were 187 individuals licensed as deer breeders in Alabama. All animals that die in a licensed deer breeder facility must be reported to WFF within 24 hours and must be made available for disease testing. Additionally, live cervids may not be transported into Alabama with the exception of non-stop interstate pass-through transportation authorized by a Letter of Authority. Captive deer may be moved within Alabama providing the licensed deer breeder notifies WFF's Law Enforcement Section Office in Montgomery prior to moving the animals. Specific animals being moved and destination must be identified prior to a transportation permit being issued.

Upon discovery of the disease in a captive herd, the primary objective of the initial CWD response efforts will be to depopulate the captive herd and determine if the disease is also present in free ranging deer surrounding the CWD infected captive deer facility. In the event a CWD infected captive deer is identified, the following measures will be implemented as rapidly as possible:

1. Prohibit transport of all cervids from any licensed game breeder or propagation facility for a reasonable period to allow for a WFF/ADAI cervid transport record audit which may identify other breeders or enclosures which may have been exposed to infected animals, equipment or facilities.
2. Quarantine identified suspect facilities and animals.

3. Under applicable statutory and regulatory authority, and in cooperation with ADAI, depopulate all cervids from the facility where the infected deer was discovered and test all deer for CWD.
4. Inspect, modify or augment the fence surrounding the facility to exclude free ranging native deer.
5. Decontaminate the facility to the maximum extent practical following the USDA APHIS guidelines.
6. If the facility was legally permitted, suspend or revoke the permit pending investigation. Revocation of permit due to CWD occurrence is a lifetime action with no potential for re-issuance.
7. Attempt to trace-back and trace-forward any and all cervids in contact with CWD infected animals to determine the origin and prevent further infection.
8. Implement the management actions described in section **B. Response for Free Ranging Deer within Alabama** using the captive facility as the index case.

D. Response for Out-of-State Detection within 50 miles and 5 miles of the Alabama Border:

If CWD is detected in an adjacent state within 50 miles of an Alabama border, the primary objectives of the response effort will be to:

- a) increase CWD surveillance of those areas within Alabama that are nearest the out-of-state endemic area
- b) communicate and coordinate with the public and other agencies on issues related to CWD and the actions being taken by WFF.

Upon notification from an adjacent state of a CWD positive detection within 5 miles of an Alabama border, the following management actions will be implemented:

1. WFF will notify appropriate parties using means identified in section **A. General Response for Detection within Alabama**. WFF's Deer Studies Project Leader will contact deer coordinators/project leaders in the infected state and remain apprised of the infected state's status.
2. The Alabama surveillance area will be determined using topographical boundaries (streams, roads, etc.) and marked on appropriate maps, using the nearest out-of-state positive site as a starting point. The size and location of the area will be determined based on local geographic features and on basic deer biology.
3. Increased CWD sampling will occur in the surveillance area primarily using hunter-killed deer and road killed deer. Initially, if possible, a minimum of 60 samples will be collected from the surveillance area to establish at 95% confidence that CWD does not exist at over 5% prevalence in the area. Subsequent sampling intensity and management action will be determined based on results of sampling by the infected state and by sampling results in the Alabama border area.

Targeted sampling may be employed by WFF along with the collection methods outlined above. If a CWD positive is detected during the sampling in Alabama, section **B. Response for Free Ranging Deer within Alabama** of this Response Plan will be activated.

E. Public Education for Adapting to CWD:

1. If CWD is identified in free ranging deer in Alabama, WFF will begin a comprehensive program to educate citizens on how to adapt to having this disease in the environment on a long term basis.
2. Initially, effort will be focused to make the most current information on this disease available to all citizens in a manner that is easily understood and relevant to their daily lives. All common media and social networking outlets will be used to accomplish this objective.
3. Regular updates will be made after the initial focused effort, especially as new information becomes available.

Summary

Information and understanding of all aspects of CWD is continually growing and changing. As new information becomes available, WFF will incorporate new strategies to improve CWD surveillance and prevent the introduction of this disease into Alabama. The actions outlined in this response plan are based on the most current knowledge available and incorporate information provided by the experiences of various states in battling CWD.

Definitions

Active surveillance - Sampling of healthy cervids from either hunter killed, road killed, or those killed because of crop damage.

Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAI) – State agency responsible for providing timely, fair and expert regulatory control over product, business entities, movement, and application of goods and services for which applicable state and federal law exists and strive to protect and provide service to Alabama consumers.

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – The State agency consisting of six Divisions, including the Administrative Division, Marine Police Division, Marine Resources Division, State Lands Division, State Parks Division, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division.

Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) - The State agency responsible for protecting and managing deer in Alabama.

Approved laboratory - A private, State, Federal, or university laboratory that has passed an annual proficiency test for CWD disease testing. All CWD testing must be done in a laboratory approved by NVSL, ADAI's Thompson-Bishop-Sparks State Diagnostic Laboratory in Auburn is an approved laboratory for CWD testing in Alabama.

Captive deer - Members of the Family Cervidae held within a perimeter fence or confined area and permitted under a valid Game Breeder's License or Propagation Permit.

Cervids - All members of the Family Cervidae and their hybrids. Species in the Family Cervidae include white-tailed deer, mule deer, black-tailed deer, elk, moose, caribou, fallow deer, axis deer, sika deer, red deer, and numerous other species around the world.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) - The Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) of cervids.

CWD Infection Zone (CIZ) - The geographic area of Alabama influenced by a positive case of CWD. It is in this area that related CWD management activities will take place.

CWD response plan – WFF's management document that describes the coordinated response to a CWD outbreak.

Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) - A screening test used to detect the presence of antibodies or antigen in a sample. In terms of CWD testing, all non-negative results must be confirmed by an immunohistochemistry (IHC) test.

Epidemiology – A science that deals with the incidence, distribution, and control of disease in a population.

Free-ranging deer - Members of the Family Cervidae that are not confined, but are considered wild, as opposed to captive cervids.

Herd - One or more animals that are (a) under common ownership or supervision and are grouped on one or more parts of any single premises (lot, farm, or ranch): or (b) all animals under common ownership or supervision on two or more premises which are geographically separated but on which animals have been interchanged or had direct or indirect contact with one another: or (c) the free-ranging cervids owned (held in public trust) by the citizens of the State.

Immunohistochemistry - Microscopic localization of specific antigen in tissues by staining with antibodies labeled with fluorescent or pigmented material; or a laboratory test performed to identify prions and other infectious agents.

Interstate - Movement of animals, by-products, equipment, or other items from one state to another.

National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) - The USDA-APHIS-VS laboratory responsible for confirmation of CWD positive tissues located in Ames, Iowa.

Prevalence - Number of cervids affected with CWD at a specific time as a percent of those that are susceptible to the disease (the at-risk population).

Prion - Normal proteins whose shape can be transformed to cause disease.

Quarantine - A period of time during which a vehicle, animal, or material suspected of carrying a contagious disease is detained under enforced isolation to prevent spread of disease.

Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) - SCWDS was founded in 1957 by the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to determine the cause of widespread die-offs of white-tailed deer. It is headquartered at The University of Georgia's College of Veterinary Medicine in Athens, Georgia. This was the first diagnostic and research service to be established for the specific purpose of investigating wildlife diseases. The objectives of SCWDS are to: 1) detect causes of sickness and death in wildlife, 2) define the impact of diseases and parasites upon wild animal populations, 3) delineate disease interrelationships between wildlife and domestic livestock, and 4) determine the role of wildlife in transmission of human diseases.

Surveillance - Activities related to the detection of a disease.

Targeted surveillance - Sampling of cervids displaying clinical signs consistent with CWD.

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) - Syndromes believed to be caused by misfolded prions in the brain. Examples include Scrapie in sheep and goats, CWD in cervids, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle, and variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in humans.

United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services (USDA-APHIS-VS) - An agency of APHIS in charge of domesticated animal health activities within the United States. The mission of Veterinary Services (VS) is to protect and improve the health, quality, and marketability of our nation's animals, animal products, and veterinary biologics by preventing, controlling, and/or eliminating animal diseases, and monitoring and promoting animal health and productivity.

United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA-APHIS-WS) - An agency of APHIS to assist in wildlife health activities within the United States. The mission of Wildlife Services (WS) is to provide Federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife.

Sample Press Release Following Discovery of CWD in Alabama

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE

CONTACT: FIRST AND LAST NAME
CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

Chronic Wasting Disease Found in XXXXXXXXX County TYPE OF DEER

MONTGOMERY — Samples from NUMBER AND TYPE OF DEER recently collected in NAME OF COUNTY near NAME OF NEAREST TOWN have been confirmed positive for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). These are the first cases of CWD detected in Alabama's deer herd. Wildlife officials believe the event is currently isolated in the area surrounding the location where these CWD positive TYPE OF DEER were discovered.

CWD is a member of the group of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Other diseases in this group include scrapie in sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease) in cattle, and Cruetzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. CWD among cervids is a progressive, fatal disease that commonly results in altered behavior as a result of microscopic changes made to the brain of affected animals. An animal may carry the disease for years without outward indication, but in the latter stages, signs may include listlessness, lowering of the head, weight loss, repetitive walking in set patterns, and a lack of responsiveness. CWD is not known to affect humans.

The animal(s) that tested positive for CWD was/were a TYPE OF CERVID AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH (HUNTER-HARVESTED OR OTHERWISE) inspected as part of the state's CWD surveillance and testing procedures. Preliminary tests performed at the FIRST TEST LOCATION discovered the positive case, which was confirmed by NAME OF USDA APPROVED CONFIRMATION LABORATORY.

"Now that we have detected CWD in Alabama, our primary objective is to contain this disease," said FIRST AND LAST NAMES, TITLE AND AGENCY. "Working collaboratively with experts in the field we have developed protocols to address CWD and implementation is already under way."

There is no vaccine or cure for CWD, but steps have been taken to minimize the risk of the disease spreading from beyond the area where it currently exists. For example, human-induced movements of wild or captive deer, elk, or other susceptible species will be restricted and mandatory hunter check stations will be established.

"This is obviously an unfortunate and rather significant development," said TITLE AND AGENCY, FIRST AND LAST NAMES. "We take the presence of this disease very seriously and have a plan of action to deal with it. The Department will do whatever is prudent and reasonable to protect the state's deer resources and our hunting heritage."

Although wildlife officials cannot say how long the disease has been present in Alabama or if it occurs in other areas of the state, they have had an active CWD surveillance program for more than a decade.

“We have tested more than **NUMBER** wild deer in Alabama since 2002, and the captive-deer industry has submitted more than **NUMBER** CWD test results as well,” said **FIRST AND LAST NAMES**, **POSITION** with **AGENCY**.

Alabama’s Department of Agriculture and Industries oversees a voluntary CWD herd monitoring status program with the intent to facilitate trade and marketability for interested cervid producers in Alabama. The basis of the program is that enrolled cervid producers must ensure that all mortalities during the previous year were tested for CWD and the disease was not detected.

Wildlife biologists, hunters, and landowners would certainly have preferred for Alabama’s deer populations to have not been dealt this challenge, but WFF has developed a CWD Management Plan that includes management practices intended to contain the disease

The disease was first recognized in 1967 in captive mule deer in Colorado. CWD has also been documented in captive and/or free-ranging deer in 22 states and 2 Canadian provinces.

More information on CWD can be found on DCNR’s website, <http://www.outdooralabama.com/research-mgmt/publications/wasting-disease.cfm>, or at the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance website, <http://www.cwd-info.org>.

More information on WFF’s CWD Response Plan can be found at www.outdooralabama.com.