

Help Protect Missouri's White-tailed Deer!



Q&As about CWD and Related MDC Regulations and Actions

OCTOBER 2015

WHAT IS CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD)?

Chronic Wasting Disease is a fatal disease that is spread from deer to deer and kills all deer it infects. This neurological disease infects only deer and other members of the deer family (called cervids) by causing degeneration of brain tissue, which slowly leads to death. It is caused by misshapen proteins called “prions.” The disease has no vaccine or cure and is 100-percent fatal.

HOW IS CWD SPREAD?

CWD is spread from deer to deer. A primary way CWD is spread is through direct deer-to-deer contact. CWD can also be spread through deer contact with soil that has been contaminated through the feces, urine, saliva or carcasses of infected deer. The potential for transmission increases when deer gather in larger, concentrated numbers. Young bucks can also potentially spread the disease to new areas as they search for territories and mates. Moving carcasses of potentially infected deer out of the immediate area and improperly disposing of them can also spread the disease.

WHY IS CWD SUCH A THREAT?

CWD has the potential to greatly reduce deer numbers and deer hunting. The continued spread of Chronic Wasting Disease in Missouri has the potential to significantly reduce deer numbers in the state over time -- and therefore reduce future hunting and wildlife-watching opportunities for Missouri's nearly 520,000 deer hunters and almost two million wildlife watchers, along with reducing the economic benefits to local businesses and economies from deer hunting and watching.

The white-tailed deer is a popular, valued and important species of native wildlife and game animal in Missouri. Missouri offers some of the best deer hunting in the country, and deer hunting is an important part of many Missourians' lives and family traditions. Deer hunting is also an important economic driver in Missouri and gives a \$1 billion annual boost to the state and local economies.

CAN CWD BE TRANSMITTED TO PEOPLE, PETS OR LIVESTOCK?

Research says no. CWD is limited to members of the deer family. There is no evidence that CWD can be transmitted to people, pets, or livestock. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends not eating deer infected with CWD. We recommend that hunters and others wear gloves when processing any game to help prevent the transmission of any potential disease.

WHERE DID CWD COME FROM?

We don't know. CWD was first found in captive mule deer at a research facility in Colorado in the 1960s. It was first found in the wild in Colorado in the 1980s. Since then, it has spread to almost two dozen states. The first cases in Missouri were found at a private big-game hunting facility in 2010 and 2011. The first cases in free-ranging deer were found soon after near the private facility.

WHERE HAS CWD BEEN FOUND IN MISSOURI?

CWD has been found in northeast and central Missouri. The first cases of CWD in Missouri were detected in 2010 and 2011 in captive deer at private big-game hunting preserves in Linn and Macon counties. A total of 11 cases were confirmed in captive deer at the facilities. Since then, 26 cases (as of July 2015) of CWD have been confirmed in free-ranging deer with most found in Macon and Adair counties in northeast Missouri and one in Cole County in central Missouri.

WHAT COUNTIES ARE AFFECTED BY CWD AND RESULTING MDC ACTIONS?

19 counties in central and northeast Missouri are affected. They make up MDC's CWD management areas because CWD has been found in or around them. The 11 northeast counties are: Adair, Chariton, Knox, Linn, Macon, Putnam, Randolph, Schuyler, Scotland, Shelby and Sullivan. The 8 central counties are: Boone, Callaway, Cole, Cooper, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, and Osage.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIAL DEER REGULATIONS FOR CENTRAL & NORTHEAST MISSOURI?

MDC has removed the antler-point restriction for the 19 central and northeast counties in and around where CWD has been found. This was done so young bucks are no longer protected from harvest because young bucks can spread the disease to new areas as they search for territories and mates. Our *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet has more information.

MDC has increased the availability of firearms antlerless permits from 1 to 2 for the 19 central and northeast counties in and around where CWD has been found. This was done to help prevent undesired population increases in local deer numbers. Our *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet has more information.

MDC strongly discourages people from feeding deer, especially in central and northeast Missouri. Feeding deer unnaturally concentrates deer in a small area and that can help spread the disease. MDC has restricted the feeding of deer and the placement of minerals for deer in the original six counties in northeast Missouri in

and around where CWD was first found. MDC is considering expanding this restriction to add the 13 additional counties in northeast and central Missouri in and around where CWD has also been found.

MDC strongly discourages the removal of whole deer carcasses from the 19 central and northeast counties in and around where CWD has been found. Certain carcass parts, such as boned out meat, are approved to move. Our *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet has more information.

WHAT IS MDC DOING TO SLOW THE SPREAD OF CWD?

MDC collects tissue samples from hunter-harvested deer to test for CWD. MDC is working with hunters, landowners, taxidermists, and meat processors to collect tissue samples for CWD testing from hunter-harvested deer and sick deer around the state, especially in northeast and central Missouri where CWD has been found. **MDC also collects tissue samples from road-killed deer in and around where CWD has been found. We also work with private landowners in areas close to where CWD has been found to harvest additional deer for CWD testing.**

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MDC is also considering regulation changes for 2016 to help reduce the spread of CWD that would:

- Require testing of deer harvested during opening weekend of the November portion of the firearms season in the 19 central and northeast counties in and around where CWD has been found;
- Restrict the movement of whole deer carcasses and certain parts out of the 19 central and northeast counties in and around where CWD has been found;
- Restrict the importation of certain cervid carcass parts into Missouri; and
- Expand the restrictions on feeding deer and placement of minerals for deer to include the 13 additional counties in northeast and central Missouri in and around where CWD has been found.
- Our *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet has more information.

HOW ARE DEER TESTED FOR CWD?

Tissue samples taken from lymph nodes in the heads of harvested deer and some road-killed deer are sent to an independent lab for testing. There is no approved test for CWD on live deer.

WHAT MUST HUNTERS DO TO HAVE THEIR DEER TESTED?

MDC encourages hunters who harvest deer within the 19-county CWD management zones to donate a tissue sample from each harvested deer for CWD testing. Hunters simply need to take their harvested deer to a participating taxidermist, MDC office, or MDC sampling station to have a tissue sample removed. Having a tissue sample removed is free. Test results can take up to four weeks and hunters can check their results online through the MDC website. Sampling locations can be found in the *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet or on the MDC website at mdc.mo.gov.

IF A HUNTER PROCESSES A HARVESTED DEER IN THE FIELD, WHAT DO THEY NEED TO SUBMIT A SAMPLE FOR TESTING?

Bag and bring the head and a few inches of the attached neck to a sample collection station. The intent of not moving carcasses is to not transport and dispose of the carcass in a different location, such as the other side of the county.

HOW MANY DEER ARE TESTED FOR CWD AND WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

We test several thousand wild deer around the state each year for CWD and focus on areas where CWD has been found. **We have found 26 CWD-positive wild deer** in northeast and central Missouri since the disease was first discovered in the state in 2010. We found 16 new cases of CWD this past year with nine found in Macon County, six in Adair County, and one in Cole County. MDC collected more than 3,400 tissue samples this past fall and winter. **We have collected more than 43,000 tissue samples** from around the state since we began testing for the emerging disease back in 2001.

WHY DON'T YOU TEST MORE DEER?

We continue to encourage more hunters to have their harvested deer tested so we can get more samples.

CAN CWD BE ELIMINATED?

Research suggests no. Research from other states that have had CWD much longer than Missouri shows that the disease has been impossible to eliminate once it has become well established in an area. Therefore, MDC will continue to focus on managing the levels of the disease where it has been found and reducing the risk of introducing the disease to new areas of the state.

COULD CWD HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN MISSOURI BUT JUST NOT DETECTED?

Research suggests no. In the few areas of Missouri where CWD has been found, the small number of cases is very low compared to the overall local deer population. Based on this "low prevalence" we are confident the

disease was recently introduced to Missouri. To help explain, in states where CWD has become well established in the free-ranging population, the disease increases overtime in prevalence – which is the number of cases of a disease that are present in a particular population at a given time. Based on the low prevalence in Macon, Adair and Cole counties – where cases have been found -- and the failure to detect the disease in other parts of the state, we are confident that the disease was recently introduced to Missouri.

WHY HAS MDC DONE CULLING OF DEER IN AREAS WHERE CWD HAS BEEN FOUND?

Reducing the numbers of potentially infected deer in the immediate areas where CWD has been found can help slow the spread of the disease. Research shows that CWD tends to be clumped in local areas so when we find a deer with CWD, removing other deer in the immediate area can remove other deer that may be infected, which can help slow the spread of the disease. In fact, 17 of the 26 CWD-positive deer found in Missouri were detected as a result of targeted culling and sampling efforts.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF CWD AND CAN A CWD-POSITIVE DEER APPEAR HEALTHY?

Deer infected with CWD do not always look sick. Symptoms include excessive salivation, drooping head/ears, tremors, emaciation, and change in behavior (lack of fear of humans and coordination). It can take months or years for a deer infected with CWD to show any symptoms. However, an infected deer can spread the disease to other deer and contaminate the environment while appearing healthy.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CWD AND HD OR BLUE-TONGUE DISEASE?

CWD is an always fatal disease that is spread from deer to deer. Without getting too technical, CWD is caused by misshapen proteins called “prions” that concentrate in the brain, lymph nodes, spine, and eye tissue of infected animals and lead to the slow death of all infected animals. It is spread from deer to deer through body fluids. Symptoms include excessive salivation, drooping head/ears, tremors, emaciation, and change in behavior (lack of fear of humans and coordination). It can take months or years for a deer infected with CWD to show any symptoms. The continued spread of Chronic Wasting Disease in Missouri has the long-term potential to significantly reduce deer numbers in the state over time

HD or blue tongue is not always fatal, is not spread from deer to deer, and has always been in Missouri.

Hemorrhagic Disease (HD) or Blue Tongue is caused by a naturally occurring virus that has periodically affected deer populations across the U.S. -- including in Missouri -- for decades with no long-term impacts to the population. It is spread by midge flies during the summer and fall and ends when cold weather kills the flies. Symptoms include fever, reduced activity, and swollen neck, tongue or eyelids. Because sick deer are feverish, they are often found near water. Deer typically show symptoms within days of being infected. Not all deer die from HD. Deer that survive HD infection develop antibodies that provide future immunity to the virus. Hemorrhagic Disease can have significant short-term impacts on a deer herd, but has never been shown to have long-term impacts.

WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO TO HELP?

Donate tissue samples from harvested deer for CWD testing. We continue to test harvested deer from around the state for CWD and are focusing on deer harvested in the 19 central and northeast counties in and

around where CWD has been discovered. Our *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet has more information and a list of participating testing sites.

Do not move whole deer carcasses out of the 19 central and northeast counties in and around where CWD has been found. Moving carcasses of potentially infected deer out of the immediate areas where harvested and improperly disposing of them can also spread the disease. Certain carcass parts, such as boned out meat, are approved to move. Our *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet has more information.

Do not feed deer or place minerals for deer. CWD is spread through direct deer-to-deer contact and through deer contact with soil that has been contaminated with urine, feces or saliva from infected animals. The potential for transmission increases when deer gather in larger, concentrated numbers. Our *2015 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information* booklet has more information.

Report any deer that look sick or are acting strange to MDC staff.

WHERE CAN SOMEONE GET MORE INFORMATION?

- National Wildlife Health Center at http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/chronic_wasting_disease/index.jsp
- **Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance** has an extensive list of links at <http://www.cwd-info.org/index.php>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/prions/cwd/index.html>
- Contact MDC's Wildlife Health Program at 573-815-7900.