



News for Immediate Release

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First Case of Chronic Wasting Disease Found in Pennsylvania Deer

Adams County Captive Deer Tests Positive; No Evidence of Effect on Humans

Harrisburg – The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture today confirmed the first positive case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the state on a deer farm in Adams County.

The disease is fatal in deer, elk and moose, but there is no evidence that CWD can be transmitted to humans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The World Health Organization.

The positive sample was taken from a white-tailed deer at 1491 New Chester Rd., New Oxford, and tested as part of Pennsylvania's intensive CWD monitoring efforts. The sample tissue was tested at the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory in Harrisburg and verified at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa.

In addition to the Adams County location, the department has quarantined two farms directly associated with the positive deer at 6464 Jacks Hollow Rd., Williamsport, Lycoming County, and 61 Pickett Rd., Dover, York County. The quarantine prevents movement of animals on and off the premises.

"Pennsylvania has an aggressive Chronic Wasting Disease surveillance program and a strong response plan," said Agriculture Secretary George Greig. "Steps are being taken to prevent further spread of this disease to the state's captive and wild deer populations."

An interagency CWD task force is in place to address the threat of the disease to Pennsylvania's captive and wild deer, elk and moose populations. The task force includes representatives of the departments of Agriculture, Environmental Protection and Health, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The task force will carry out the response plan, which includes education and outreach with public meetings and minimizing risk factors through continued surveillance, testing and management.

"To date CWD has not been found in Pennsylvania's wild deer population," said Pennsylvania Game Commission Executive Director Carl G. Roe. "Concerns over CWD should not prevent anyone from enjoying deer hunting and consuming meat from healthy animals."

Roe said that hunters should shoot only healthy-appearing animals, and take precautions like wearing rubber gloves when field-dressing their deer and wash thoroughly when finished.

“Though no human disease has been associated with CWD, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends people or other animals do not eat any part of an animal diagnosed with or showing signs of CWD,” said Acting Health Secretary Michael Wolf.

CWD attacks the brains of infected deer, elk and moose, producing small lesions that eventually result in death. It is transmitted by direct animal-to-animal contact through saliva, feces and urine.

Signs of the disease include weight loss, excessive salivation, increased drinking and urination, and abnormal behavior like stumbling, trembling and depression. Infected deer and elk may also allow unusually close approach by humans or natural predators. The disease is fatal and there is no known treatment or vaccine.

CWD was first discovered in Colorado captive mule deer in 1967, and has since been detected in 22 states and Canadian provinces, including Pennsylvania’s neighboring states of New York, West Virginia and Maryland. Pennsylvania is the 23rd state to find CWD in either a captive or wild population of deer and the 13th state to have it only in a captive deer herd.

Surveillance for CWD has been ongoing in Pennsylvania since 1998. The agriculture department coordinates a mandatory CWD monitoring program for more than 23,000 captive deer on 1,100 breeding farms, hobby farms and shooting preserves.

In addition, the Game Commission collects samples from hunter-harvested deer and elk and those that appear sick or behave abnormally. Since 1998, the commission has tested more than 38,000 free-ranging deer and elk for CWD and all have tested negative.

For more information from the departments of Agriculture and Health and the Pennsylvania Game Commission, visit:

- www.agriculture.state.pa.us (click on the “Chronic Wasting Disease Information” button on the homepage),
- www.pgc.state.pa.us (click on “CWD Info”), and
- www.health.state.pa.us (click on “Diseases and Conditions”)

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