

## **ATTENTION HUNTERS**

**Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been detected in Idaho. New hunting and processing practices will be necessary to help safeguard your health, the health of your family, and the health of wildlife populations in our area.**

### **What is CWD?**

Chronic wasting disease is a fatal prion-based disease that affects mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose, and caribou. Prion diseases are a family of progressive neurodegenerative disorders that affect both humans and animals. The abnormal folding of prion proteins leads to brain damage and a number of behavioral symptoms. Infection can occur through either direct contact with an infected animal or indirect contact with a contaminated surface. Unfortunately, the prion agent can remain viable and infectious in the environment (e.g. in the soil, on leaves or other surfaces) for many years. Once established in an area, CWD is nearly impossible to eradicate.

### **Is CWD a risk to humans?**

To date, there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in humans. However, studies suggest CWD poses a risk to non-human primates, such as macaques, that eat meat from CWD-infected animals or come in contact with brain or bodily fluids from infected deer or elk. These studies raise concerns that there may also be a risk to humans. People should avoid exposure to animals exhibiting unusual behavior in areas where CWD is suspected to occur. Public health experts, including the CDC, recommend that people avoid consuming meat from animals suspected or confirmed to be CWD-positive.

### **How does CWD impact wildlife?**

Currently, there are no vaccines or treatments for CWD. No immunity, recovery, or resistance to infection has been documented in any of the affected species. Left unmanaged, CWD is believed to be capable of severely depressing or even completely eliminating populations of susceptible species. Intensive management can sustain populations, however, through site-specific, intensive culling and general population suppression to reduce the prevalence of the disease. In either case, population declines are likely to occur where CWD is suspected or confirmed.

### **How is CWD detected?**

Because of CWD's sometimes low relative prevalence and prolonged latent period, detection remains difficult. Symptoms of CWD, which may take over a year to develop, include drastic weight loss (wasting), stumbling, listlessness, and other neurologic symptoms. Infected animals can shed the prion before the onset of clinical signs, sometimes for months, and some infected animals may exhibit no symptoms at all. Tissues with the highest concentration of infectious material include the brain, spinal cord, eyes, lymph nodes, and tonsils. In general, clinical testing of an animal's lymph nodes is used to verify CWD in an animal. As a result, states where CWD is believed to be present have generally expanded hunting opportunity as a method to obtain high numbers of samples for testing. However, hunters are strongly discouraged from consuming meat from CWD-positive animals.

### **How is CWD managed?**

While eradication of CWD is generally impossible, the spread and intensity of infections can be managed through intensive culling and general population suppression to reduce disease prevalence. These steps also provide wildlife managers with the samples needed to monitor infection rates and detect the spread of CWD into new areas.

To enhance sampling efforts, in Fall 2021 the state of Idaho authorized over 1,500 additional deer tags for state-licensed hunters within an enhanced surveillance area including the greater Riggins-Grangeville-Elk City area. While hunters have been encouraged to harvest deer in this area to enhance surveillance efforts, please be aware that all animals harvested within this area should be tested, and animals that test positive should not be consumed.

Current maps of regional enhanced surveillance zones can be found at <https://nezpercewildlife.org/chronic-wasting-disease>.

### **What should I do?**

You can help prevent the spread of CWD:

- Do not shoot, handle, or eat meat from animal that look sick or are acting strangely or are found dead (road-kill).
- Do not shoot animals in the head or neck.
- Mark or make note of the GPS location of your kill site for testing purposes.
- When field-dressing an animal:
  - Quarter out or debone your animal at the kill site.
  - Wear latex or rubber gloves when dressing the animal or handling the meat.
  - Minimize how much you handle the organs of the animal, particularly the brain or spinal cord tissues.
  - Do not use household knives or other kitchen utensils for field dressing. Wash all butchering tools with a bleach solution before leaving the kill site.
- Do not transport whole carcasses or high-risk parts (including brain, spinal cord, eyes, lymph nodes in the head and neck, and tonsils) across state/province/territorial boundaries, into new areas, or out of an official enhanced surveillance zone. Current maps of regional enhanced surveillance zones can be found at <https://nezpercewildlife.org/chronic-wasting-disease>. This recommendation still allows for the transport of quartered carcasses, deboned meat, cut/wrapped meat, shed antlers, hides, canine teeth, finished taxidermy mounts, and cleaned skulls or skull cap thoroughly cleaned of all brain material.
- If you harvest a deer, elk, or moose within an official CWD enhanced surveillance zone, strongly consider having your animal tested, especially before you eat the meat:
  - Visit <https://idfg.idaho.gov/cwd/sampling/how-to> for information on how to collect a sample, where to send your sample, and other information. Collection of this sample should happen at the kill site, if at all possible. Samples can also be dropped off (or extracted) at the Nez Perce Tribal Wildlife Division office (260 Phinney Ave., Lapwai, ID).
  - If you are transporting a whole carcass and encounter a CWD sampling site or check station, please consider stopping to have your animal tested.
  - If your animal tests positive for CWD, do not eat the meat. Allow extra time for the testing process and receipt of the results (4-6 weeks or more).

- If you return home with a whole carcass, all removed animal parts should be double-bagged and disposed of in a licensed landfill. Animal parts should NOT be discarded outdoors or returned to the field to decompose, as doing so has the potential to spread CWD.
- If you have your animal commercially processed, consider asking that your animal be processed individually to avoid mixing meat from multiple animals.