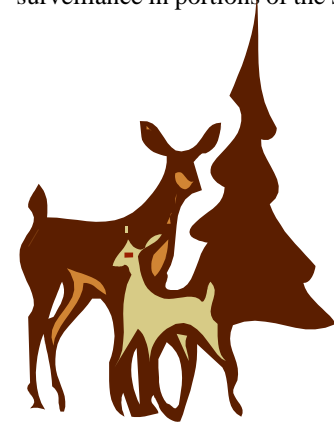


Has CWD ever been found in North Dakota?

To date, CWD has never been found in captive or wild deer or elk in North Dakota. The ND Department of Agriculture's Board of Animal Health initiated mandatory CWD surveillance testing in 1998 of any captive elk or deer that dies from any cause that is more than 12 months of age. Captive cervid producers have submitted more than 700 brain samples for CWD testing; none have tested positive. If CWD is found in a captive animal, the farm would be quarantined and the disease eradicated using recommended disease control strategies.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has conducted targeted surveillance throughout the state, which entails collection of samples from wild deer and elk that are suspect or showing signs consistent with CWD. Approximately 25 animals have been tested since 1996 and all samples have come back negative for the disease. The Game and Fish Department plans to initiate random surveillance in portions of the state this fall.



Where has CWD Occurred?

CWD occurs in wild deer and elk primarily in northeastern Colorado and adjacent parts of Wyoming; it has been diagnosed in wild deer in Nebraska, South Dakota, Wisconsin, New Mexico and Saskatchewan, Canada. CWD has also been found in captive elk in Colorado, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana, Minnesota, Wyoming and Saskatchewan and Alberta.

How is CWD diagnosed?

CWD is diagnosed through microscopic examination of brain samples from dead deer or elk.

How should I dispose of the bones and offal from my deer?

Bones and offal can be disposed through rendering, burial, incineration or landfill.

For more information contact:

North Dakota Department of Agriculture
State Meat Inspection Program
Dr. Andrea L. Grondahl
(701) 328-4762
or
Board of Animal Health
Dr. Larry Schuler or Dr. Susan Keller
(701) 328-2655
or
Visit the USDA website:

www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/cwd/index.html



Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Information on CWD for deer hunters, meat processors and consumers.



What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)?

CWD is a progressive, fatal brain and nervous system disease of deer and elk, belonging to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE's). TSE's are caused by an abnormally shaped protein called a prion, which can damage brain and nerve tissue. Although it shares certain features with other TSE's like bovine spongiform encephalopathy ("Mad Cow Disease") or scrapie in sheep, it is a distinct disease apparently affecting only deer and elk.

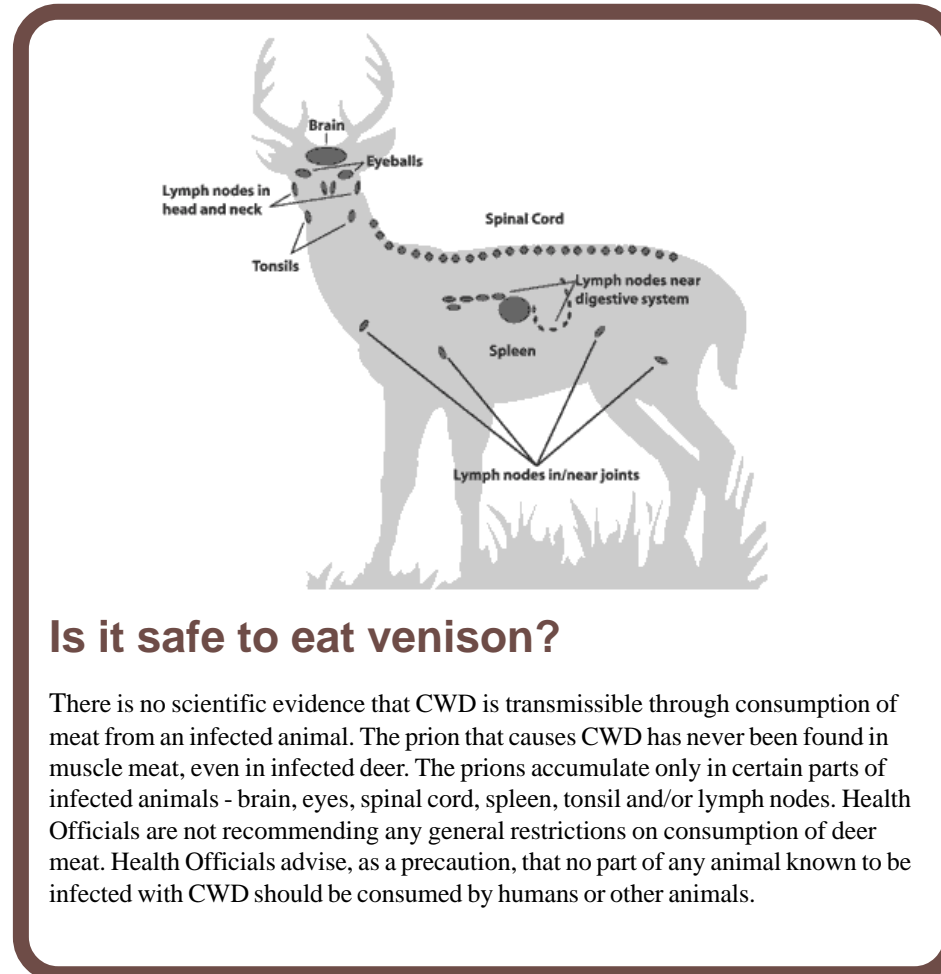
The mode of transmission between animals is not completely understood, but is thought to be likely through animal-to-animal contact and/or contamination of the habitat by a diseased animal.

What are the signs of CWD in Deer and Elk?

CWD attacks the brains of infected deer and elk causing the animals to become emaciated, display abnormal behavior, lose bodily functions and die. Signs identified in captive cervids include progressive weight loss, drooling, loss of appetite, excessive thirst and urination and listlessness. CWD is a slowly progressive disease; signs are usually not seen until the animal is 18 months of age or older.

Is CWD transmissible to humans?

A World Health Organization panel of experts reviewed all available information on CWD and concluded that there is no scientific evidence that it can infect humans. CWD is similar to the human TSE disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, but the two diseases have not been linked the way new-variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease in people has been linked to consumption of products from cattle with bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Epidemiologists with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found no evidence that prion-related disease in humans occurs more often in hunters and consumers of wild game than in the general population. More than 16 years of monitoring in affected areas of Colorado found no disease in people living there. Ongoing public health surveillance is important to fully assess the potential risk.



Is it safe to eat venison?

There is no scientific evidence that CWD is transmissible through consumption of meat from an infected animal. The prion that causes CWD has never been found in muscle meat, even in infected deer. The prions accumulate only in certain parts of infected animals - brain, eyes, spinal cord, spleen, tonsil and/or lymph nodes. Health Officials are not recommending any general restrictions on consumption of deer meat. Health Officials advise, as a precaution, that no part of any animal known to be infected with CWD should be consumed by humans or other animals.

What precautionary steps should meat processors take when handling deer and elk meat products?

It is important to minimize handling of the brain, spinal cord and major nerve complexes. Meat should be processed without splitting the backbone. All cuts used in steaks and chops can be removed from the carcass as boneless cuts. One knife or handsaw should be designated for head removal. It is also important to ensure thorough cleaning and sanitizing of knives, saws, grinders and other meat-cutting tools. Meat trimmings should be inspected and all lymph glands removed before grinding and sausage making. All equipment must be completely disassembled and all meat scraps removed before the equipment is used again. All parts should be washed with a detergent specifically designed for cleaning meat equipment. Equipment should then be rinsed with clean water, sanitized with a chemical sanitizer or 180 degrees Fahrenheit water and allowed to air dry. These sound sanitation practices protect against known food safety concerns.

What precautionary steps should hunters take when field dressing deer or handling meat?

CWD has not been diagnosed in any other species except cervids and to date has not been found in North Dakota. There is no scientific evidence that CWD is transmissible through consumption of meat from an infected animal. Standard personal safety procedures apply when processing cervid carcasses. Rubber gloves, soap and water, and good cleanliness should be standard practices with all wildlife kills. Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues. Avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, tonsils, spleen and lymph glands. Proper techniques should be used regardless as other known potential hazards such as E.coli can be prevented through good handling practices.