



What to Know About Chronic Wasting Disease

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries continues to monitor and test the state's white-tailed deer population for chronic wasting disease (CDW). It has not been found in Louisiana but Texas and Arkansas have documented it. Here are some facts about the disease:

CWD FACT SHEET

What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

CWD is a neurodegenerative disease found in most deer species, including moose, elk, mule deer and white-tailed deer. It is infectious, always fatal and there is no known cure. It's part of a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) and is similar to BSE (mad cow disease) of cattle and scrapie in sheep. These diseases cause irreversible damage to brain tissue which leads to salivation, neurological symptoms, emaciation and death of the animal.

Has it been found in Louisiana's white-tailed deer population?

No. But Texas and Arkansas have recorded it. The disease has been documented in 23 states and two Canadian provinces. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has been monitoring and testing for CWD for more than 10 years and has checked more than 7,000 deer during that time period. The state has yet to test positive for it.

What causes CWD and how is it spread?

CWD is caused by prions, which are proteins normally found in the body that have mutated. These prions kill nerve cells and cause holes to develop in the brain tissue. They are spread through direct deer-to-deer contact or through contact with urine, feces, saliva and body parts of infected deer or infectious materials in the soil. It's most commonly found in deer pens and captive facilities. It is different from hemorrhagic disease (epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus and/ or bluetongue virus), which is a virus spread by bites from infected insects.

What signs do deer with CWD display?

It can take one to two years for CWD to incubate and exhibit outward symptoms in the infected animal. When symptoms appear they can include emaciation, lethargy, abnormal behavior and loss of bodily functions. Other signs include excessive salivation, loss of appetite, progressive weight loss, excessive thirst and urination, teeth grinding and drooping ears.



Can humans contract CWD?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) there is no evidence that CWD can infect humans. However, the CDCP recommends caution in handling venison in the infected region and that deer be tested for CWD before consuming.

What is the plan of action the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has developed should CWD be discovered in Louisiana?

If it is discovered in Louisiana, LDWF will create a management zone, the size of which will depend on the locations and distribution of infected deer as well as the density, distribution and seasonal movements of the local deer population. There will be feeding and baiting restrictions in the management zone where the disease is found. It may be necessary to reduce and maintain a lower deer density in that area. There also will be movement restrictions placed on deer body parts. Hunters will not be able to bring a whole deer out from the management zone. They'll be restricted to deboned meat, a clean skull plate with the antlers, and the cape, which is the skin of the head and shoulders. Any deer harvested within the management zone will be tested. LDWF will maintain intensive surveillance in the management zone for an indefinite period of time.

