

Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan - Georgia Department of Natural Resources

- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) affects members of the deer family.
- Moving live deer and infected carcass parts are the biggest risk factors for introducing CWD into Georgia.
- CWD is caused by a defective protein, called a prion, that spreads among deer through bodily fluids.
- CWD is always fatal and there is currently no vaccine or treatment.
- The incubation period is very long, 18 to 24 months from exposure to death. One deer can infect many others and contaminate the environment with prions.
- Once it is well established in an area (spread beyond a 1-mile radius), eradication is essentially impossible. Only if discovered early, when still localized with a low prevalence rate is there any hope of eradication.

ONGOING SURVEILLANCE EFFORTS

- Since 2002, DNR has tested ~20,000 deer. DNR currently collects about 1,800 samples per year.
- DNR uses a risk-based surveillance system designed for early detection. Sampling intensity per county depends on risk factors (e.g. distance to captive deer facilities, taxidermists, processors; past sampling effort, and distance to known CWD areas).

INITIAL RESPONSE

Goal: Detect CWD early, determine the prevalence and geographic extent, eradicate if possible or minimize spread, and keep prevalence in the population low.

If CWD is discovered in Georgia (or within 5 miles of the state line)

- Implement communications plan and designate members of the multi-agency response team operating under common Incident Command System structure.
- Establish a CWD Management Area (CMA) that includes each county within a 5-mile radius around the positive sample and increase sampling.
- Sample intensively within a 1-mile radius to determine prevalence and geographic extent.
- Collect samples from road-killed deer and hunter-harvested deer voluntarily dropped at self-serve freezers placed around the CMA. Sampling efforts may also include cluster sampling, issuance of special permits, and crop damage permits.
- Cooperate with GA Dept of Agriculture to identify and sample high-fence enclosures in the CMA.
- Restrictions on carcass disposal will be reviewed. Hunters, taxidermists, and processors will be advised how to best dispose of carcasses.

LONG-TERM CWD MANAGEMENT

- Once initial prevalence and geographic extent are assessed, CMAs will be adjusted accordingly.
- DNR will use a cluster sampling strategy to keep CWD prevalence low within the area. The disease appears to form clusters of positives within family groups. DNR will work with landowners to identify family groups for sampling around each positive deer. This focused approach identifies individual deer most likely to be positive for harvest without negatively affecting the population.
- Maintain healthy deer populations. Maintaining good relationships with landowners and a sustainably huntable population of deer is crucial to disease management. Significant deer population reductions are not part of DNR's management actions.
- Age structure management. Older deer are more likely to have contracted CWD and can spread it to other deer. Managing for younger deer also helps keep prevalence of CWD low. Antler restrictions that promote older age classes may be rescinded from counties within a CMA.
- Feeding/baiting guidelines. The following actions may reduce risk:
 - Broadcast the feed over large areas (500+ square feet), avoid piling it
 - Avoid trough and gravity feeders
 - Move feeding locations periodically to avoid buildup of excrement in soil
 - Limit feeding to when you are actively hunting, avoid feeding out of season
 - Baiting may be used as a tool for cluster sampling in CWD management areas, WRD will provide more specific guidance directly to hunters in those areas.