

Western Wildlife Health Committee Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease that affects cervids including mule and white-tailed deer, elk, and red deer. This plan is developed to aid wildlife agencies manage issues related to CWD in a fashion that will optimize disease management and promote the agencies' effectiveness.

Several factors are important in management of CWD including effective planning, surveillance, and response to a disease detection. We recommend that agencies implement protocols for each item identified in this document.

PLANNING

A plan that addresses all aspects of disease management is critical to an agencies success in providing information to the public regarding CWD, making an appropriate response to detection in free-ranging or captive wildlife, and conducting appropriate surveillance to document CWD status in a state or province. Important elements to successful planning include:

1. Prepare and maintain a media response plan
 - a. As a minimum, the following should be on hand to address information requests and to develop a press release in the event of a positive detection.
 - i. Current background document (Western Wildlife Health Committee briefing paper is attached) should be maintained.
 - ii. Designate an agency spokesperson(s) knowledgeable in issues related to CWD.
 - iii. Maintain and update, as needed both video and still photographs of CWD-related issues that are appropriate for to media outlets requesting information. Remember that the general public will view these so there is a need to ensure video is appropriate for a broad audience.
 - iv. Develop a draft press release that would be ready for use with incorporation of specific information on a detection.
 - b. Develop a program to provide information on CWD to hunters and the general public to ensure, to the extent possible, that people in each jurisdiction are familiar with CWD and its impacts on wildlife. This will aid in building public support for the agency and its actions if a CWD detection occurs.
2. Coordinate and inform key internal agency personnel as well as federal and state agencies as appropriate
 - a. In the event of a detection, it may be necessary to coordinate with various state/provincial or federal agencies.
 - i. Identify appropriate agencies that would need to be contacted and advised of the results of surveillance activities including the detection of a CWD positive case. Generally, this should include

- the State Veterinarian and the USDA Area Veterinarian in Charge, but there may be others that are important for a specific jurisdiction.
1. Develop a contact list of key personnel from all agencies that would include work phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and cell phone numbers.
 2. Develop a contact list for political persons who would have a need to know of a positive case. This would include a contact in the Governor's office.
- b. In the event of a detection, it is important to contact all key persons within the wildlife agency that have immediate need for notification. It is important that a contact list with phone, e-mail, and cell phone information.
3. Establish a surveillance protocol that includes both targeted and hunter-harvested surveillance elements.
- a. Targeted surveillance is a protocol that focuses on the identifying animals showing clinical signs of the disease and collecting these animals and submitting appropriate samples to a laboratory for testing. Successful targeted surveillance is dependent upon a well-trained field force that is sufficiently trained to recognize the clinical signs associated with CWD.
 - i. It is important to establish a training protocol for all field personnel who have opportunity to observe cervids either in a free-ranging or captive setting. One important training tool is the video developed by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.
 - ii. Establish an agency policy related to collection of animals with clinical signs consistent with CWD and ensure all persons in positions to collect wildlife are aware of the policy.
 - iii. Detection of CWD can occur in zoos or game farms (captive herds) and it is important to require all persons who hold captive native cervids to submit heads of any cervid that dies to an appropriate laboratory for CWD testing.
 - b. Hunter-harvested surveillance entails collection of samples from wildlife killed by sport hunting. This is an important element of a CWD management plan as large numbers of samples can be collected without unplanned harvest of wildlife.
 - i. Establish target areas for collections. Important areas include sites in proximity to captive held cervid farms, areas along boundaries with states/provinces with a positive CWD history, or areas where deer or elk are at particularly high densities.
 - ii. Develop a sample collection plan based on the options available in each jurisdiction. Hunter check stations, meat processing plants, and taxidermists are all viable collection sites.
 - iii. Maintain all sample collection materials as needed to collect suitable samples for collection. Training is also important to ensure persons collecting samples are effective at collection of usable samples.
 - iv. Establish arrangements with an appropriate lab for testing samples.

- c. Provide testing facilities with a contact person(s) who should be contacted in the event of a positive test result.
4. Establish a hunter notification plan
 - a. Agencies need to determine how they will handle notification of hunters, both those with negative and positive tests. Options include using post cards to notify negative tests and phone calls to positive tests.
5. Establish a carcass disposal plan
 - a. Disposal of carcasses collected for testing should be addressed before the need exists to do so. Options include:
 - i. Disposal at landfills
 - ii. Rendering plants
 - iii. Burying at specific sites developed by the agency
 - iv. Incineration
 - b. Coordination with all federal and state agencies is important to ensure conflicts are resolved before the need for disposal arises.
6. Develop a position on carcass importation. This should include a mechanism to advise hunters of this position.

IF CWD IS DETECTED IN FREE-RANGING ANIMALS, THE FOLLOWING IS RECOMMENDED:

Action:

1. Increase the collection of heads from the area with active searching for hunter-killed animals. The sample size required should be determined based on deer/elk density in the Game Management Unit or herd unit (if this can be defined) where the detection occurred. One option would be to increase permits to harvest deer/elk during the next hunting season. If the agency is unable to meet the targeted number of collections, other alternatives including shooting by Department personnel or by U.S.D.A. Wildlife Services.
2. To aid in determining the extent of deer movement in the focal area, radio marking adult males deer/elk should be considered.
3. Develop a press release, in concert with the Department of Agriculture, and other federal or state agencies as appropriate, to advise the public that CWD has been detected in your jurisdiction. Additionally, all land owners/permittees in the Game Management Unit involved should be notified of the detection and provided the attached briefing document (or one that replaces it).
4. If animals are required to be removed work with appropriate resources within and outside the Department to ensure completion of all environmental documentation (National Environmental Policy Act).

**IF CWD IS DETECTED IN A ZOO OR GAME FARM OR OTHER CAPTIVE HERD,
THE FOLLOWING IS RECOMMENDED:**

Action:

1. If CWD is detected in a facility permitted by the wildlife agency, it is imperative that a quarantine be placed on the facility.
2. A trace-back effort must be made to document the origin of all animals in the permitted facility. Also, the location of all animals shipped from the facility needs to be determined by the permittee and this information provided to the wildlife agency. The wildlife agency needs to notify all recipients of animals shipped from the facility that they have received animals from a facility where CWD has been detected. Further, the wildlife agency needs to notify the wildlife agency in the state-province where an animal has been shipped that an animal from a CWD positive facility has been shipped to their jurisdiction.
3. A review group comprised of the wildlife agencies' legal council, the wildlife agencies leadership (i.e. Director and/or wildlife division leader), the State Veterinarian, the permittee, the USDA Veterinarian in Charge, and Department personnel experienced in CWD needs to be convened to develop a management plan for the permitted facility.

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