Chronic Wasting Disease
Independent Research Study Results

On May 25, 2017, initial results from a Canadian research study were presented at the Prion Conference 2017 in Edinburgh, Scotland. The findings indicate that Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is transmissible to macaque monkeys. These results add to limited existing scientific evidence supporting the possibility of CWD transmission to humans.

To date, no studies have shown that Chronic Wasting Disease can actually be passed on to humans, and no human cases of Chronic Wasting Disease have ever been identified.

As a precaution to reduce the potential for human health risk from CWD, Alberta Health recommends that:

- hunters and others who handle cervid carcasses follow basic handling precautions (refer to document CWD Guidelines: Deer Carcass Transportation and Handling on the Alberta Environment and Parks [AEP] website)
- all deer, moose and elk harvested from CWD mandatory submission Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) be tested for CWD (refer to document Attention Deer Hunters: Surveillance of Harvested Deer Heads for CWD on the AEP website); and
- a negative result (no CWD detected by the test) be obtained before any part of the animal is eaten.

Questions and answers about CWD in Alberta

What do you recommend I do if I hunt cervids?

If you are hunting in an area where CWD has been detected, take precautions when handling the carcass of deer harvested in the area. Wear gloves, debone the meat, and minimize handling of the brain and spinal cord when field-dressing a deer. Wash hands and tools thoroughly after field-dressing is completed.

How are deer managed in Alberta in regards to CWD?

Hunting opportunities for mule deer and white-tailed deer are optimized to provide maximum recreational and economic value to Albertans while maintaining local deer populations at sustainable levels. In regards to CWD, the management goal is to reduce mule deer populations in the CWD risk areas in eastern AB within the limits of hunter and landowner support.

Will deer management change in light of these research results?

Deer management is a complex issue that incorporates many social, economic, and recreational values. AEP will
continue to monitor the occurrence and distribution of CWD in wildlife, incorporate harvest plans to decrease the probability of disease transmission on the landscape, and provide appropriate information to hunters.

**Will current deer management change to provide more control of CWD?**

AEP is evaluating whether it is feasible to use hunting as a more effective tool to reduce CWD in wild deer populations and developing a harvest management strategy for deer in CWD zones. Based on Alberta’s surveillance and research results, increased hunter harvest of mule deer, males, or winter groups could reduce the spread and increase of CWD in deer populations but other impacts of changing management approaches need to be examined.

**Do we know where CWD occurs in wild deer in Alberta?**

Alberta has monitored the occurrence of CWD in wild deer continuously since 1998. In Alberta CWD occurs primarily in male mule deer in eastern and east central AB. Specific information and maps are available on our wildlife disease web pages at: [alberta.ca/cwd](http://alberta.ca/cwd).

**Will/can Alberta test heads of all harvested deer, elk, and moose?**

Estimated cumulative harvest of deer, elk, and moose in Alberta each year is ~60 000 animals. Even within the CWD risk area, over 14,000 deer alone are killed each year. Most of these animals are killed in a very short timeframe, from mid-October to early December. It is not feasible to test heads of all harvested animals at this time.

The CWD surveillance program is based on ongoing risk assessment. Current data indicate the risk of CWD is limited to south-eastern Alberta and wild deer and overall remains low (5.2 per cent in 2017/18). CWD has been identified in two elk and one moose that shared range with infected deer. There is no evidence that CWD is established in elk or moose populations in Alberta.

**Can any hunter submit a harvested animal for testing? Does that include First Nations hunters?**

The Alberta CWD surveillance program has always accepted the head of any cervid legally harvested within Alberta.

**From a wildlife surveillance perspective, are hunters required to have harvested deer tested? What about moose and elk?**


**What are the anticipated timelines for hunters to receive results?**

The CWD surveillance program tries hard to provide test results as soon as possible. However, given the volume of heads received and interruptions associated with the holiday season in December, it can take 2 months or more.