

Chronic Wasting Disease & Roadkill Salvage in Alberta

Salvaging dead wildlife in a chronic wasting disease area

Using Salvaged Roadkill for Bait in Alberta

From time to time, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) is asked about salvage value in roadkill wildlife. Most often, this relates to using game animals as bait within the rules around legal trapping or hunting situations. Incursion of chronic wasting disease (CWD) into the province raises the concern about potentially spreading this disease with movement of cervid carcasses (deer, elk, or moose).

This document provides an overview of the disease, the concerns, and guidelines to request a permit to salvage.

A permit must be obtained to possess each found dead or roadkill wildlife, regardless of its intended use.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Overview

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a prion disease that affects members of the cervid family such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and moose. It is fatal in all cases and cervids infected with CWD die prematurely. There is no treatment or vaccine.

Transmission of CWD occurs from deer to deer such as between females and their offspring or within groups of males. It also may involve contaminated environmental sites in areas where CWD is prevalent in wild deer.

In Alberta, CWD primarily occurs in wild mule deer and white-tailed deer populations in eastern regions of the province.

Surveillance

Alberta has tracked the occurrence of CWD in wild cervids since 1998. There are distinct patterns in the data:

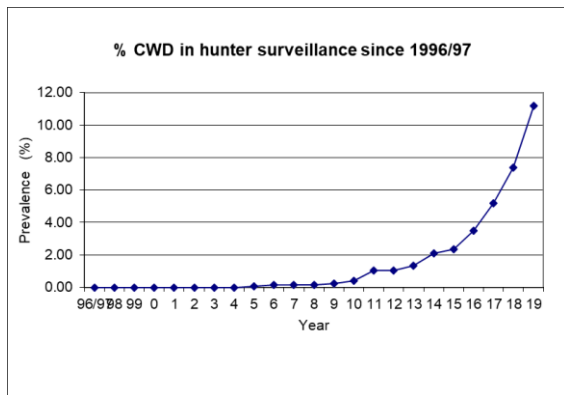
- Prevalence in surveillance samples increases significantly each year.
- Infected wild cervids tend to be mule deer and male. But any deer in the CWD risk area could potentially be infected.
- CWD is established in eastern and east-central Alberta and continues to spread westward and northward along primary watersheds.
- Within affected areas, CWD occurs in localized, small deer populations and slowly spreads to adjacent deer groups as it expands across the landscape.

Our CWD web pages show the current provincial distribution. In a broad sense, CWD largely occurs south of the North Saskatchewan River and east of Hwy 2. This area presents an increasing risk for CWD to spread north to the boreal forest, exposing local woodland caribou or west into the southern foothills.

<https://www.alberta.ca/chronic-wasting-disease-information-for-hunters.aspx>

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Transfer of CWD by Roadkill

Trappers and Outfitters can be issued permits to collect cervid roadkill for baiting purposes. But moving such cervids may risk introducing CWD to new cervid populations, including caribou.

CWD Best Management Practices developed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) recommend against moving cervids and/or cervid parts, except boned-out meat, clean hides with no head attached, clean skull plate with antlers attached, clean antlers, finished taxidermy specimens, and clean upper canine teeth in order to reduce potential spread of the disease.

Thus moving intact carcasses or parts of carcasses found dead along roads in areas where CWD occurs poses a risk to other cervids.

Why this Matters

In the long term, CWD leads to serious decline of local deer populations. In particular, there are fewer older adult males compared to healthy deer populations. Infected females die prematurely, limiting their potential to add fawns to the deer population; fewer fawns means fewer deer, and fewer future deer.

Woodland caribou are cervids of special concern provincially and federally. They are an indicator of Canada's boreal forest ecosystem and their recovery is at the forefront of considerable conservation efforts.

The potential introduction of CWD onto caribou range is of great concern as another threat to local populations and a major hindrance to caribou conservation efforts and recovery plans supported by government and industry.

Moving infected cervid carcasses from known CWD areas may also pose a risk to additional deer herds and further diminish Alberta's deer population over the long term.

How to Obtain a Permit

If road-killed wildlife is found, please contact the nearest Fish and Wildlife office **prior to taking the carcass**.

Explain the circumstances, including where the carcass was found, and where and how the carcass will be used.

A Fish and Wildlife Officer will advise you whether further investigation or inspection of the carcass is required, and whether or not a permit will be issued. If it is not possible to confirm where a road kill will be used, the Fish and Wildlife Officer will refuse the permit request.

Carcasses found within an area where CWD occurs will NOT be permitted for baiting purposes.

As a condition of the permit, there may be a requirement to submit additional information and the head may be required for testing in the CWD Surveillance Program.

Fish and Wildlife office contact information is available at:

<https://www.alberta.ca/fish-and-wildlife-contacts.aspx>