

# CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), a fatal neurological disease, occurs in mule deer and white-tailed deer in limited areas of eastern Alberta. The disease is associated with protein changes in the brain. Infected individuals experience weight loss, behavioural changes and premature death. Recent field data from long-standing infected populations in Saskatchewan, Colorado, and Wyoming indicate a shift towards younger deer, lower productivity, and fewer adult males. Theoretical models and field data indicate the disease has a significant effect on age/sex profile and long-term survival of local deer populations.

From September 2005 to April 2017, Alberta detected 592 cases of CWD in wild cervids in eastern and east central Alberta in 30 Wildlife Management Units (WMUs): WMUs 116, 118, 119, 142, 144, 148, 150, 151, 152, 158, 160, 162, 163, 164, 166, 200, 202, 203, 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 242, 250, 254, 256, 500, as well as 728, 730, and 732 (maps available on our disease web pages at <http://aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/>).

Hunters and outfitters play a vital role in CWD management. Deer heads submitted for testing and reports of emaciated deer help define the area where the disease occurs. Hunters who take advantage of increased hunting opportunities and remove deer from CWD high-risk areas contribute to fewer deer on the landscape and less opportunity for disease transmission. The cooperation and assistance of all stakeholders and interested parties is important and greatly appreciated.

It is a mandatory requirement that all deer harvested in the following WMUs be tested for CWD. Mandatory deer head submission units for 2017 are WMU 102, 116, 118, 119, 124, 138, 142, 144, 148, 150, 151, 152, 156, 158, 160, 162, 163, 164, 166, 200, 202, 203, 204, 206, 208, 228, 230, 232, 234, 236, 238, 240, 242, 254, 256, 258, 500, 728, and 730 (see attached map). In addition, three units are identified as Special Concern (WMU 250, 252, and 260). We would appreciate receiving deer heads from these units as perspective for the recent case in WMU 250. Please check the Fish and Wildlife disease web pages prior to the fall hunting seasons to get additional information and in case there are possible additions to the list above.

CWD continues to expand westward from the Saskatchewan border along specific watersheds. Although overall prevalence in hunter-harvested deer remains low (3.5 per cent in 5,112 heads in 2016), local prevalence is much higher in some WMUs, particularly in mule deer males. Additional information is available on the CWD web pages.

