CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) occurs in mule deer and white-tailed deer throughout eastern and central Alberta, and spills over into a few elk and moose. The disease is associated with protein changes in the brain that eventually result in weight loss, behavioural changes and premature death within two years. Field data from long-term infected populations of mule deer and whitetails indicate a gradual shift towards younger deer, lower productivity and fewer adult males. Dynamic real-world models and field data indicate CWD has significant effects on age/sex profile, fawn production and overall survival in local deer populations.

Alberta has monitored CWD in wild deer since 1998. The disease was detected in 2005 on the Alberta/Saskatchewan border. Cumulatively it has been documented in 7,289 cervids (5,982 mule deer, 1,200 white-tailed deer, 78 elk and 29 moose) and continues to expand westward from Saskatchewan. CWD occurs in Alberta throughout the parklands and prairies. It also occurs in some areas west of Highway 2 from Athabasca south and into the southern foothills.

The CWD Surveillance Program monitors long-term occurrence in designated wildlife management units (WMUs) along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border, CFB Wainwright and WMUs along the leading western and northern edge of the known distribution. Previous annual program summaries, details and CWD distribution maps are available at alberta.ca/chronic-wasting-disease.

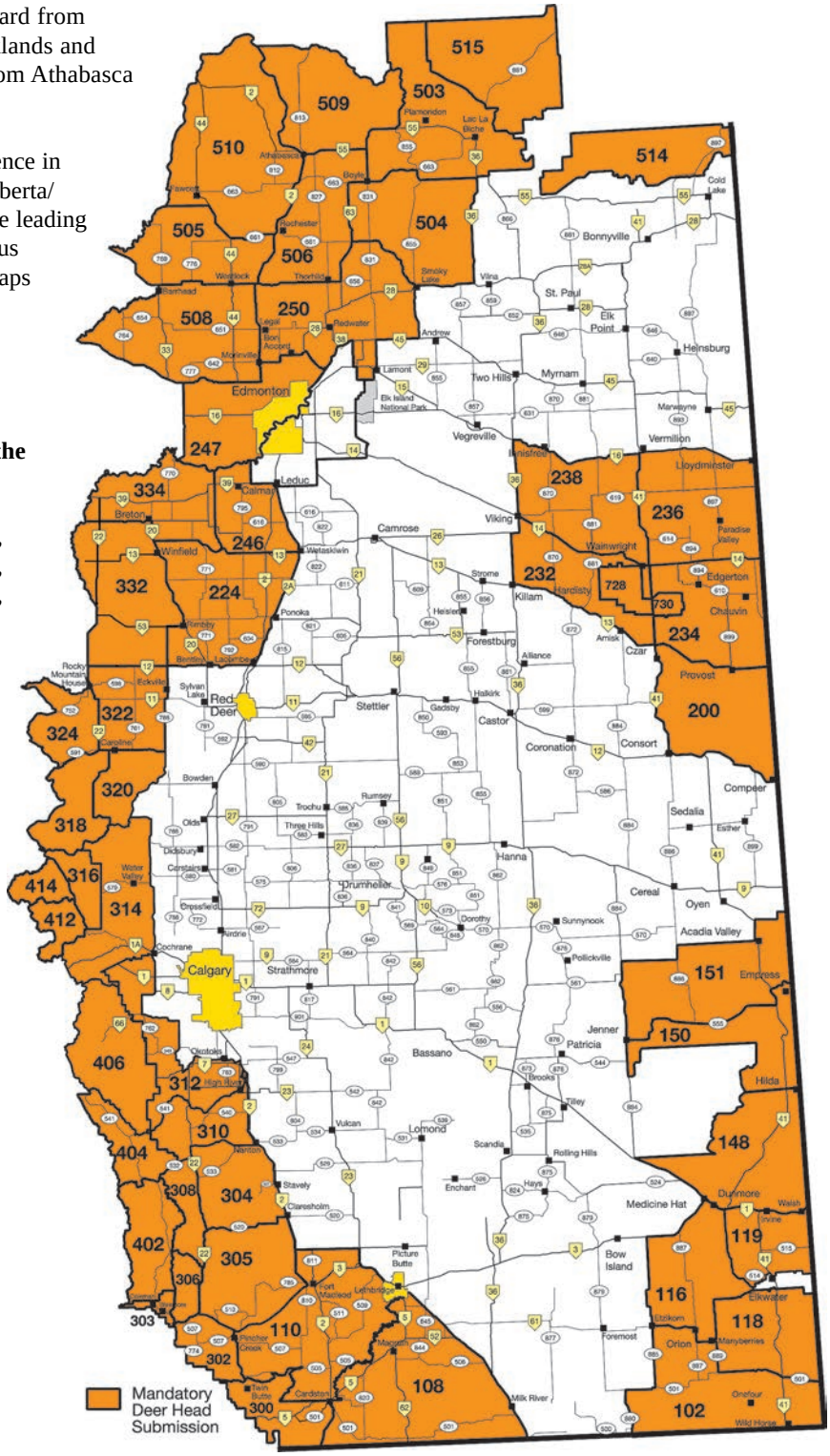
For game management purposes, we have the following requirements for 2026/27 hunting seasons:

Mandatory requirement to submit DEER harvested in the following WMUs:

- **102, 108, 110, 116, 118, 119, 148, 150, 151, 200, 224, 232, 234, 236, 238, 246, 247, 250, 300, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 316, 318, 320, 322, 324, 332, 334, 402, 404, 406, 412, 414, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 509, 510, 514, 515, 728 and 730 (see map).**

Our data over the last 25 years clearly indicate that CWD occurs primarily in mule deer in Alberta and thus they provide the best surveillance sample for tracking the disease. However, we also are interested in tracking CWD in white-tailed deer.

Hunters and outfitters play a vital role in CWD surveillance. As in previous years, the CWD program accepts the head of any cervid legally harvested in Alberta. Deer heads submitted for testing, as well as examination of emaciated deer, help define the area where the disease occurs. Hunters who remove deer from CWD risk areas contribute to fewer deer on the landscape and less opportunity for disease transmission. The cooperation and assistance of all stakeholders, landowners and interested parties is important and greatly appreciated.

Logistical timelines limit lab testing capacity to a maximum of approximately 2,500 heads per month. While most cervids are harvested in November, it generally takes until March to test heads from late-season harvests.

Please check the CWD web pages prior to the fall hunting seasons to get additional information regarding the 2026/27 surveillance program.