

## Chronic Wasting Disease Found in a White-Tailed Deer in Maryland

**Annapolis, Md. (February 10, 2011)** — The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) received laboratory confirmation on February 10, 2011 that a white-tailed deer harvested in Maryland tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD). This is the first confirmed case of CWD in Maryland. A hunter in Allegany County reported taking the deer on November 27, 2010 in Green Ridge State Forest. Maryland is now one of 20 other states and Canadian provinces with CWD documented in deer, elk or moose.

This news is unsettling, but it was not unexpected. Fortunately, DNR have been preparing for this event, and they already have a plan in place that will help us to deal with the realities of living with this disease. In the coming months, our efforts will be guided by our CWD Response Plan, which can be found on DNR website.

[http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/hunt\\_trap/deer/disease/cwdinformation.asp](http://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/hunt_trap/deer/disease/cwdinformation.asp)

In 2002 CWD was confirmed in Wisconsin from three bucks killed near Mount Horeb in November 2001. This marked the first incidence of CWD east of the Mississippi River. This was a major discovery because the disease was now in a high-density deer population. Many western deer herds average less than 15 deer per square mile while Wisconsin has herds exceeding 45 deer per square mile. This was important because infected deer can pass the disease to other individuals, and high density herds, especially those in close proximity such as at feed sites, provide an avenue for high disease transmission rates. Scientists knew deer could pass the disease to other deer but were, and still largely remain, unsure of exactly how they do it.

As of December 2006, CWD had been identified in captive and free-ranging herds in 14 U.S. states, 2 Canadian provinces and Korea (from an elk imported from Canada in 1997). CWD has been identified in white-tailed and mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk and moose. Black-tailed deer are also susceptible as they are a subspecies of mule deer. Much research has been conducted on CWD and much continues today, but we still don't know the origin of the CWD agent(s) in cervids (deer, elk and moose) and likely never will.



A new study recently identified the prions in blood and saliva. These locations are important from a disease transmission standpoint. It raises the possibility that biting insects that feed on blood may have the ability to transfer the disease from CWD-positive animals to other individuals. It also raises the possibility that CWD-positive animals can transmit the disease via saliva at bait stations, feed and mineral sites, rubs, scrapes and through social grooming. We all know the branch above a scrape is referred to as the “licking” branch and we know bucks lick and rub their forehead glands on rubs. Many hunters have also viewed submissive bucks licking a dominant buck’s forehead. Young bucks, especially yearlings, are generally submissive to older bucks. We know a high percentage of yearling bucks disperse one to five miles from their natal range, so infected yearling bucks potentially could serve as major disease transmission vehicles. I say they “potentially could serve” because I am merely speculating. Research hasn’t identified this occurring in free-ranging populations. Also, the disease doesn’t appear to move within a region by leaps that would result from yearling dispersal. Future research will hopefully shed more light on exact modes of transmission.

What do we know about CWD? We know it is always fatal and there is no vaccine, cure or practical live animal test. The best current live animal test uses tonsil tissue but it is ineffective in elk and not applicable for large scale use in deer. We as hunters and managers, what can we expect in the future? We can expect CWD will likely be found in new states/provinces and new areas in current CWD-positive states/provinces. We can expect to see a lot of research on CWD, its mode(s) of transmission, etc., and we can expect pressure from deer farmers to open state/provincial borders and allow movement of captive animals. We can also expect changes in deer season regulations such as extended seasons and increased bag limits. Currently, the best way to limit the spread of CWD in free-ranging herds is to reduce deer populations to minimize contact between individuals.

Will CWD mark the end of deer hunting? Probably not, but we must be vigilant to balance deer herds with their habitats, minimize transmission of CWD in infected areas, prevent introduction of CWD in new areas, and support research and our state agency’s efforts. The sum of these items equates to being a good steward of our deer resource. For more information on CWD visit the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance website at [www.cwd-info.org](http://www.cwd-info.org).

QDMA is helping in the fight against CWD by providing substantial funding to support a research project assessing the effects of deer population structure and dispersal on CWD control efforts. QDMA secured a \$38,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Help Budweiser Help the Outdoor’s Program. Researchers from Texas A&M University-Kingsville and the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources will determine population structure and spatial scale of deer populations in the CWD-infected area of West Virginia, and assess dispersal and connectivity among those deer herds. They will also assess the role of habitat and landscape features in animal movements and dispersal patterns.

The research project is a genetic study of white-tailed deer and should provide essential knowledge to guide national CWD management efforts.

The Maryland State Chapter and Maryland Branches of QDMA support our state agency’s efforts and DNR’s Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan. We could expect changes in deer season regulations such as extended and/or increased bag limits. As good stewards of our deer

resource hunters and managers, the best way to help limit the spread of CWD in our western counties is to minimize contact between individual deer is to STOP BAITING.

Reliable science provides support for a ban of baiting and feeding of deer to reduce disease risks for CWD.

- Deer can get CWD by ingesting something contaminated with the disease prion.
- CWD prions may be shed in feces and saliva.
- Evidence from captive situations indicates that deer can get CWD from contaminated environments.
- Baiting and Feeding causes unnatural concentrations of deer.
- Reduction of contact through a ban on baiting and feeding is likely very important to eradicating or containing a CWD outbreak.

In addition, experts in CWD, wildlife disease and deer nutrition support bans on baiting and feeding as part of a comprehensive strategy to prevent and/or manage CWD.

The QDMA favors CWD management strategies that acknowledge the active role of hunters and landowners by enabling continued hunting opportunities, and encourage the involvement of hunters and landowners in the decision-making process, and continued hunting heritage in Maryland.



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Contents of this article from:

The Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance website [www.cwd-info.org](http://www.cwd-info.org)  
[www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com)

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