



# CWD — ADJUSTING OUR PERSPECTIVE WHAT EVERY PENNSYLVANIAN SHOULD KNOW

## What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a neurological (brain and nervous system) disease found in deer and elk in certain geographic locations in North America. CWD belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) or prion diseases; it attacks the brains of infected deer and elk and produces small lesions that result in death. While CWD is similar to mad cow disease in cattle and scrapie in sheep, there is no known relationship between it and any other TSE of animals or people.

## How is it spread?

While it's not known exactly how CWD is spread, it is believed that the agent responsible for the disease may be spread both directly (animal to animal contact) and indirectly (soil or other surface to animal) most likely through the saliva and feces of infected animals.

## Where has it been found?

CWD is known to infect deer and elk in Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Alberta and Saskatchewan. CWD has not been found in Pennsylvania, but has been found in Maryland 10.15 miles from our border.

## Is it dangerous to humans?

There is no evidence that the agent of CWD affects humans. However, public health officials recommend that human exposure to the CWD agent be avoided as they continue to research the disease.

## How can I tell if a deer has CWD?

Infected animals may not show symptoms in the early stages. However, as the disease progresses, infected animals begin to lose body functions and display abnormal behaviors, such as staggering or standing with poor posture. Many diseases can look like CWD. At this time the diagnosis can only be made after death.

## What should I do if I see a deer displaying CWD symptoms?

You should accurately document the location of the animal and immediately contact the nearest Game Commission Region Office. Do not attempt to disturb, kill or remove the animal.

## What precautions should hunters take?

Wildlife officials have suggested that hunters in areas where CWD is known to exist follow these guidelines to prevent the spread of the disease:

- Do not shoot, handle or consume an animal that appears sick.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves when field-dressing, and wash hands and instruments after field-dressing.
- Bone out the meat from your animal, and minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues. Ask your deer processor to process your meat individually, without meat from other animals, or process your own meat.
- Have your animal tested, and do not consume meat from any animal that tests positive for the disease.

## What can hunters do?

Hunters need to tell political leaders of their concerns about CWD. Indicate your support for increased financial assistance to state wildlife and agricultural agencies to combat CWD. Encourage state officials to support the important steps taken to prevent the introduction of CWD. And finally, because any concentration of deer or elk assists in the spread of diseases, stop supplemental feeding programs.

## Where can I learn more?

Hunters are encouraged to contact state wildlife agencies where they plan to hunt for more information on the status of CWD in that state. Most states, including Pennsylvania, now have up-to-date information on CWD on their websites. The Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance website ([www.cwd-info.org](http://www.cwd-info.org)) is frequently updated with new information.

## CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD) AND THE PGC PARTS BAN

CWD has not been found in Pennsylvania. To help prevent it from entering the state, the PGC has banned the importation of specific cervid carcass parts from states and provinces where CWD has been found. Hunters heading to a state with a history of CWD should become familiar with that state's wildlife regulations and guidelines for the transportation of harvested game animals as well as the PGC Cervid Parts Importation Ban. Hunters harvesting deer, elk or moose elsewhere should visit the Game Commission website to see what states and Canadian provinces are affected. Hunters may not bring back into Pennsylvania: the head (including brain, tonsils, eyes and retropharyngeal lymph nodes), spinal cord/backbone, spleen, skull plate with attached antlers if visible brain or spinal cord material is present, cape if visible brain or spinal cord material is present, upper canine teeth if root structure or other soft material is present, any object or article containing visible brain or spinal cord material, unfinished taxidermy mounts or brain-tanned hides of any deer, elk or moose from listed states or provinces.

Bring back to Pennsylvania only low-risk materials: meat without the backbone, skull plate with attached antlers if no visible brain or spinal cord material is present, tanned hide or raw hide with no visible brain or spinal cord material present, cape if no visible brain or spinal cord material is present, upper canine teeth if no root structure or other soft material is present, and finished taxidermy mounts.

It is strongly recommended that hunters get their animals tested for CWD if hunting in a CWD positive state. If after returning to Pennsylvania a hunter is notified by another wildlife agency where they had hunted that their game tested positive for CWD, the hunter is encouraged to contact the Game Commission for further instructions. For more information on CWD, visit the Game Commission website at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us) and on the Home Page banner click on "Wildlife," "Wildlife Diseases Home" and then "CWD."



## DEER HUNTERS - HELP US DETECT TUBERCULOSIS

We want to prevent TB from being introduced into the wild white-tailed deer and elk herds in Pennsylvania. The bacteria known as *Mycobacterium bovis* can cause infection in most mammal species. Some wildlife species susceptible to bovine TB include: white-tailed deer, elk, bison, mule deer, black bears, bobcats, coyotes, opossums, raccoons and foxes. We are asking that hunters who observe anything that resembles this photo to contact the Game Commission immediately. These abscesses may be found in lymph nodes throughout the body, as well as in the tonsils. When cut open, these nodules contain yellow-green or tan pus. Tan or yellow lumps may be found throughout the chest cavity and in the lungs. The lungs may also develop dark and firm areas. Read more about TB on the Game Commission's website at [www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)