



What Every Meat Processor Should Know About Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

CWD is a member of the TSE (Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy) family of diseases that includes BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) or Mad Cow Disease in cattle, CJD (Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease) in humans, and Scrapie in sheep and goats. It was first recognized in Colorado deer and elk in 1967. The specific cause of CWD is believed to be an abnormal prion (protein infectious particle) that is found in the brain, the nervous system and some lymphoid tissues of infected animals. It causes death of brain cells, and on a microscopic level, holes appear in the brain tissue.

What animals get CWD?

CWD has been diagnosed in white-tailed deer, mule deer, black-tailed deer and hybrids thereof, as well as elk and moose. **CWD has not been shown to be transmissible to humans or traditional livestock.** However, it is recommended that meat from CWD-positive animals not be consumed. It has been diagnosed in 18 states and 2 Canadian provinces, see below for a current list (8/11).

How is CWD transmitted?

Scientists believe that CWD is transmitted both directly through animal-to-animal contact and indirectly through food and soil contaminated with bodily excretions including feces, urine and saliva. Contaminated carcasses or high-risk carcass parts also may spread the disease indirectly through environmental contamination which can last for decades.

What are the signs of CWD?

In the early stages of infection, animals may appear perfectly healthy. In the late stages of the disease, animals infected with CWD show a general, often startling loss of body condition and excessive drinking, urination, salivation and drooling are common. Behavioral and neurologic changes such as repetitive walking patterns, droopy ears, incoordination, a wide-based stance and listlessness also accompany CWD infection. Some animals lose their fear of humans and predators. The onset of these signs may not become evident for years. There is no known cure. There are many look-alike diseases and many that can occur at the same time as CWD.

What actions have been taken to prevent the spread of CWD?

The movement of high-risk carcass parts (brain, spinal cord, lymph tissues) is a potential avenue through which CWD could be spread from infected areas. Several states, including Pennsylvania, have developed regulations to prohibit the importation of high-risk carcass parts from CWD endemic states. As of July, 2011 Pennsylvania's importation ban prohibits the importation of high-risk carcass parts from Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland (CWD Management Area), Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York (Madison and Oneida Counties), Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia (CWD Containment Area), West Virginia (CWD Containment Area), Wisconsin, Wyoming and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and

Saskatchewan. Pennsylvanians hunting in CWD-positive areas should get their animals tested and should leave high-risk carcass parts in the area where the animal was hunted. The **Ban includes parts from cervids taken in farmed settings, in addition to those taken in the wild in any state or province where CWD has been diagnosed in any cervid.**

Specific carcass parts, where the CWD prion (causative substance) concentrates are: head (including brain, tonsils, eyes and all lymph nodes); spinal cord and smaller nerves; spleen; upper canine teeth, if root structure is present; any object or article containing visible brain or spinal cord material; unfinished taxidermy mounts or brain-tanned hides.

Pennsylvania’s high-risk carcass parts **ban does not limit the importation of:** 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 is present or finished taxidermy mounts.

What can you do as a meat processor to prevent the spread of CWD?

Determine if the cervid carcass presented to you is from a CWD-positive state or area

1. If the cervid carcass **IS NOT** from a CWD-positive state or area:
 - a. Wear latex or rubber gloves when processing the carcass.
 - b. Bone the carcass to minimize cutting into high-risk parts.
 - c. Avoid cutting into the backbone, either lengthwise or across the spine.
 - d. Dispose of butcher waste through the trash, or in food waste dumpsters intended for regulated landfills.
2. If the cervid carcass **IS** from a CWD-positive state or area:
 - a. If high-risk parts are present, contact your Game Commission region office for disposal procedures.
 - b. If no high-risk parts are present proceed according to the recommendations in item 1a. and 1b. above.
 - c. Thoroughly clean hands and processing tools with soap and water, then sanitize tools in a solution of 50 percent household chlorine bleach and 50 percent water for one hour.
 - d. Keep all cervid meat and meat products from CWD-positive or suspect animals separated from other meat.
 - e. CWD-positive or suspect meat or waste should *not* be rendered, burned in burn barrels, deposited in bone piles or spread in areas where it can come in contact with other animals – contact your Game Commission region office for pick up of potentially contaminated material.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Contact Information

Northwest Region	814-432-3188	Northeast Region	570-675-1143
Southwest Region	724-238-9523	Southeast Region	610-926-3136
Northcentral Region	570-398-4744	Dr. Walter Cottrell	814-863-8370
Southcentral Region	814-643-1831	Wildlife Veterinarian	