

Chronic Wasting Disease

Alberta-Saskatchewan 2006 Border Program Overview

Alberta is taking an aggressive approach to prevent the further spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in wild deer. This overview describes control actions planned for winter 2006 as part of long-term control efforts.

What is CWD?

Chronic wasting disease is a nervous system disease that affects deer and elk (cervids). The disease is associated with normal proteins in the brain that are converted to abnormal proteins (also known as prions). CWD has the potential to reduce wild populations and result in significant economic costs to Alberta.

In areas of North America where CWD has become firmly established, there have been significant impacts on big game hunting and rural economies. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that CWD can affect humans. As a precaution, the World Health Organization advises against allowing products from animals known to be infected with any prion disease into the human food system.

In Saskatchewan as of January 16, 2006, CWD has been confirmed in more than 220 farmed elk and 101 wild deer. In Alberta, the disease has been confirmed in one farmed elk and two farmed white-tailed deer as well as four wild mule deer (fall 2005). These cases show there is a significant risk of the spread of CWD along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border.

Managing CWD

Canada's Expert Scientific Panel on Chronic Wasting Disease completed a report that recommends:

- a.) Eradicating sparks (e.g., new areas of infection) through local depopulation and intense monitoring in surrounding areas, and,
- b.) Controlling CWD in infected areas through population reduction to a target density of 1 cervid (e.g., wild deer) per square kilometre in critical habitat.

As part of Alberta's aggressive approach to prevent the spread of CWD, the Fish and Wildlife Division of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development has modified deer management programs along the Alberta-Saskatchewan

border. Herd reduction is being achieved through hunting season adjustments, special quota hunts and CWD response plans.

What's Happening Along the Border

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development's strategy for the Alberta-Saskatchewan 2006 Border Program includes:

1. Reducing wild deer herds in specific locations within the program area as required—to prevent the spread of CWD and eliminate current pockets of disease.
2. Developing and enhancing landbase access and landowner support for CWD field programs.
3. Ensuring that operational efficiency and cost-effective measures are implemented for CWD programs.
4. Reacting in a timely manner to any new positive cases of the disease.

How it Impacts Us

Beginning in January 2006, Fish and Wildlife staff will begin deer herd reduction and disease sampling programs in the Border South and Border North areas (see map).

Staff will seek permission from landowners in these areas to collect and process deer. All carcasses will be examined to determine general health conditions—once the deer heads have been tested and are found to be negative for CWD, salvaged meat will be distributed to people whose names are on local Fish and Wildlife meat distribution lists.

Hides will be provided to the Alberta Fish and Game Association Wildlife Trust Fund. All carcasses will be disposed of according to public health guidelines and protocols. Deer heads will be tested by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Additional Information

For more information, contact your local Fish and Wildlife office or visit the Alberta Sustainable Resource Development website
<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/diseases/>

Alberta-Saskatchewan 2006 Border Program

Targeted Wildlife Management Units (WMUs)

These targeted areas, shown in colour, have been the focus of CWD surveillance for several years.

Central Alberta Continued Surveillance

- Monitoring will continue in 2006

Border North Herd Reduction

- Chauvin and Dillberry Lake Provincial Park area (Feb. 24 - March 4)

Border South Herd Reduction

- 10 km vicinity of positive deer south of Empress (Jan. 24 - 31)
- Acadia Valley area (Feb. 9 - 16)
- Red Deer River valley at the Alberta-Saskatchewan border (Feb. 1 - 8)

Enhanced Surveillance

- South Saskatchewan River in WMU 150 (Feb. 25 - March 4)
- Red Deer River in WMU 151 (March 5 - 12)

