

Before bringing meat or animal parts into BC, follow these carcass preparation steps:

- Remove the head, hide, hooves, mammary glands, all internal organs and spinal column at the kill site, and leave these parts at the kill site — the head should be sent for CWD testing in the province or state of origin if possible.
  - Debone or have the meat commercially prepared before removing it from the province or state of origin.
  - Remove antlers and the connecting bone plate from the rest of the skull. Clean any attached hide or soft tissue from the bone plate. Disinfect the bone plate and antler bases, with a solution of 1 part 5% bleach to 2 parts water.
  - Remove raw capes and hides from the carcass and seal them in a waterproof container so that no fluids, tissue or hair can escape. The hides may be brought into BC, but should be frozen or delivered to a licensed tanning facility for processing within 5 days of entry.
- 3. Use only synthetic cervid scents and attractants.** Products that contain cervid urine, feces, saliva or scent glands *may be capable of transmitting diseases*, including CWD. Synthetic products do not carry these same risks.

## How can we learn more about CWD?

The BC CWD Surveillance Program coordinates the testing of animals from across the province. We want to test animals that show symptoms that resemble CWD, but our Program also focuses on hunter-killed deer, elk and moose in areas of the province near the Alberta and US borders. Hunters and game cutters are helping us collect harvested animal heads, and regional hunting groups and MOE offices in Cranbrook and Fort St. John are collecting heads from road-killed animals. Samples are removed from the heads and sent to laboratories for testing. Results from the CWD Surveillance Program are updated annually on the Wildlife Health Website [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth.html#program](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth.html#program).

## For more information on CWD in BC:

1. MOE Wildlife Health provides more information and links: [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth.html).
2. University of Northern BC/MOE sponsored on-line Manual of Common Diseases and Parasites: [www.unbc.ca/nlui/wildlife\\_diseases\\_bc](http://www.unbc.ca/nlui/wildlife_diseases_bc). Fill out the Wildlife Disease Manual reporting form with the appropriate information at [www.unbc.ca/nlui/wildlife\\_diseases\\_bc/specimen.htm](http://www.unbc.ca/nlui/wildlife_diseases_bc/specimen.htm). Submit the completed form to the MOE Wildlife Veterinarian directly at [wildlife@victoria1.gov.bc.ca](mailto:wildlife@victoria1.gov.bc.ca), or
3. Contact the Wildlife Veterinarian at [wildlife@victoria1.gov.bc.ca](mailto:wildlife@victoria1.gov.bc.ca) and ask your questions.



## General information on CWD:

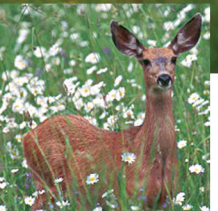
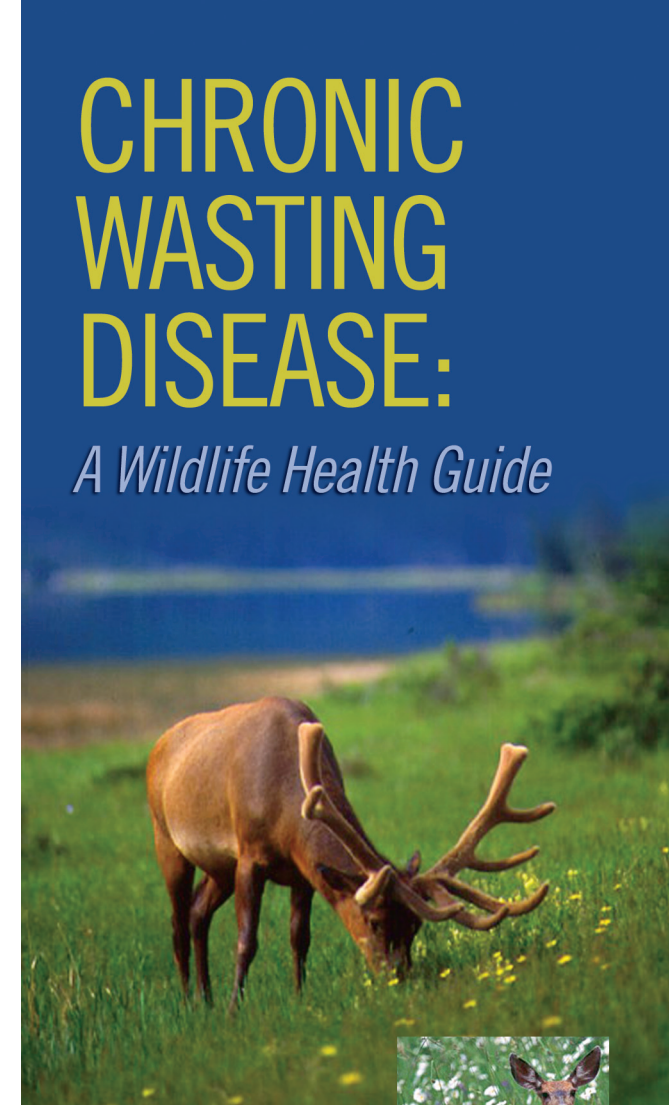
- <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/disemala/cwdmdc/cwdmdce.shtml>
- [wildlife1.usask.ca/en/cwd/chronic\\_wasting\\_disease.php](http://wildlife1.usask.ca/en/cwd/chronic_wasting_disease.php)
- [www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/diseases](http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/diseases)
- [www.nwhc.usgs.gov/our\\_research/chronic\\_wasting\\_disease.jsp](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/our_research/chronic_wasting_disease.jsp)
- [www.scwds.org](http://www.scwds.org)
- [wildlife.state.co.us/CWD/index.asp](http://wildlife.state.co.us/CWD/index.asp)

## Contact Us:

If you have further questions or need additional information, please contact your local MOE Office [www.env.gov.bc.ca/main/prgs/regions.htm](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/main/prgs/regions.htm) (click on the region for the phone number) or the MOE Wildlife Veterinarian in Victoria, Dr. Helen Schwantje, at [wildlife@victoria1.gov.bc.ca](mailto:wildlife@victoria1.gov.bc.ca).

# CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE:

## *A Wildlife Health Guide*



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

Ministry of  
Environment



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

Ministry of  
Environment

## Chronic Wasting Disease and the Ministry of Environment Wildlife Health Program

Understanding animal health requires that we collect information about the wildlife diseases and parasites that occur in individuals and populations over time. The Ministry of Environment's Wildlife Health Program needs everyone's help to monitor for an important disease of the deer family known as **Chronic Wasting Disease**.

### Chronic Wasting Disease... What is it?

**Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)** is a fatal disease of the central nervous system found in mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk and moose of North America. CWD is of increasing importance because it affects provincial, national and international trade as well as the health of wild deer species. CWD belongs to a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Each type of TSE usually affects only one species and is not naturally transmitted between species.

### What does CWD look like?

Signs of the disease include weight loss and behavioural changes. Signs seen in affected animals include:

- weight loss
- drooling
- difficulty swallowing
- increased drinking and urination
- poor coordination or stumbling
- trembling
- depression



After being infected with the CWD agent, an animal may not show symptoms for years. In captivity, infected animals are usually 2 to 7 years old before symptoms show. Infection is fatal in all cases. Unfortunately, diagnosis can be made only on dead animals, currently by microscopic examination of sections of the brain, tonsils and lymph nodes of the head.

### Where is CWD found?

The origin of CWD is not known, but the disease was first described in captive mule deer in 1967 in Colorado and Wyoming. In Canada, CWD was first diagnosed in 1981 in mule deer at the Toronto Zoo, then in captive elk in Saskatchewan in the mid 1980s. In 2000, CWD was reported in free-ranging mule deer in Saskatchewan, and by December 2005, white-tailed deer and mule deer were known to be infected in areas of the province. In the fall of 2005, CWD was diagnosed for the first time in Alberta in a free-ranging mule deer near the Saskatchewan border. In summary, CWD has been diagnosed in captive and free-ranging deer, elk and moose (one free-ranging) in 10 US states and two Canadian provinces.

### How is CWD transmitted?

An abnormal protein called a prion is believed to cause CWD, but the methods of transmission are not completely understood. Experimental and circumstantial evidence suggests that the disease is transmitted by animal-to-animal contact and contamination of the environment, feed or water sources with saliva, urine or feces.

### Is there a risk to humans?

There is no evidence to suggest that CWD can infect humans. As a general precaution, those handling or using members of the deer family for meat should follow these guidelines:

- Do not shoot, handle or consume any animal that is acting abnormally or appears to be sick.
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when field dressing or handling any dead animal.
- Bone-out the meat from your animal. Don't saw through bone if you can avoid it, and avoid cutting through the brain or spinal cord.
- Reduce the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing is completed.
- Avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning-out a carcass will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove the remaining lymph nodes.)
- Avoid consuming the meat from any animal that tests positive for the disease.

### Is CWD present in British Columbia?

The Province of British Columbia is considered to be at low risk for CWD. British Columbia has never permitted the farming of native species of deer or elk, and BC does not permit the import of any native cervid species into the province. In addition, there are significant geographical and spatial barriers to animal movement between areas where deer or elk are infected with this disease and our borders. A CWD Surveillance Program was started in 2001. All tested animals have been negative. Because of the recent cases in free-ranging animals in neighbouring provinces, more testing is essential to provide confidence in the health of our wild deer species.

### What can you do to help?

1. **Report any deer, elk or moose of 18 months or older that is thin or shows any of the described CWD signs.** Note their location and report to your local Ministry of Environment (MOE) office or to the MOE Wildlife Veterinarian.
2. **Avoid bringing CWD-infected material into BC.** It is very important for BC hunters who hunt elk, deer or moose in Saskatchewan, Alberta or the United States to know that materials from CWD infected animals can contaminate BC habitats. Leave these materials behind!

