

# CWD, General Handling Precautions and Safe Field Dressing

## Chronic Wasting Disease in New York State

### What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is found in some deer and elk populations in North America. It is a slow and progressive disease of the central nervous system of free ranging and captive deer and elk that leads to the eventual death of the animal. It is believed to be caused by an abnormal form of protein called a prion that is found in the brain, tonsils and some lymphoid tissues of infected animals.

Signs of the illness appear in the last stage before death. They include progressive weight loss, behavioral changes, abnormal head postures and drooping ears. Deer showing these symptoms should be reported to DEC.

The mode of transmission of CWD has not been identified. Evidence suggests that CWD can pass from animal to animal by direct contact or through the contamination of feed with saliva, urine and feces.

There is currently no evidence that CWD can be transmitted to humans or domestic animals or livestock. Health officials do advise hunters NOT to consume meat from animals known to exhibit signs of the disease. Please refer to general precautions on handling of game listed below.

### Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance and Monitoring

In April of 2002, the DEC initiated a program to collect tissue samples from wild white-tailed deer populations throughout New York State to test for the presence of chronic wasting disease. DEC has collect-

ed more than 3,700 samples and submitted these to United States Department of Agriculture approved laboratories for CWD testing.

DEC implemented intensive monitoring efforts after CWD was found in two captive white-tailed deer herds in Oneida County – the first incidents of CWD in New York State. On April 8, 2005, the State Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) completed testing of the captive deer and found a total of five positive results for CWD in the two captive herds.

When CWD was discovered in two captive herds, DEC immediately implemented an adaptive response plan of intensive sampling in the area surrounding the captive facilities to determine if the disease had spread into the adjacent wild population. CWD was detected in two wild deer from Oneida County. The first positive result in a wild deer was announced on April 27, 2005 and came from a yearling white-tailed deer sampled from the Town of Verona. The second positive result was from a three year old doe, located within a mile of the location where the initial positive result was detected. These are the first known occurrences of CWD in wild deer in New York State.

What is New York State doing to address CWD in New York?

DEC has established a CWD containment area in Oneida and Madison counties and has adopted regulations to ensure the proper handling of deer and to prevent fur-

ther spread of CWD in the wild herd. DEC may establish additional containment areas if more cases of CWD are found.

In addition to the regulations for the containment area, there are also statewide restrictions on rehabilitation of wild white-tailed deer at facilities that house live deer, regulations specifying record keeping and reporting requirements for taxidermists and restrictions on the sale of deer feed. It is illegal to feed wild white-tailed deer in New York.

DEC will significantly increase its routine testing throughout the state and implement an enhanced testing program in Oneida and Madison counties.

In response to these findings, DEC will continue public outreach in Oneida County and begin statewide informational meetings to help educate citizens on CWD. DEC and DAM will conduct additional outreach and continue to aggressively pursue inspection and enforcement at all captive deer herds across the State.

For more information on CWD visit our website: [www.dec.state.ny.us](http://www.dec.state.ny.us)

The World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, and the National Institutes of Health have studied and reviewed CWD. They have not found a link between CWD and any neurological disease affecting humans.