



# **Chronic Wasting Disease Program Update**

**July 2023**

## **Background**

### What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is an incurable, highly contagious and always fatal disease of the central nervous system that affects member of the deer (cervid) family – deer, elk, moose, and caribou.

The disease is caused by one or more strains of misfolded and self-propagating proteins, called prions. Once an animal is infected with CWD, prions begin to replicate, first in the immune system (lymph nodes and tonsils) and later, in the brain, spinal cord and other organs.

### How many cases of CWD have been found in Manitoba?

- Manitoba has been monitoring wild cervids for the disease since 1997 and announced its first confirmed case of CWD in Manitoba in November 2021.
- As of July 2023, 22 positive cases of CWD have been identified.
  - Five male mule deer tested positive in 2021/22
  - 17 new positive cases were identified in 2022/23;
    - 14 male mule deer,
    - one female mule deer,
    - two male white-tailed deer.

## **Manitoba's CWD Surveillance Program Updates**

The discovery of the first positive cases of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) late in 2021 prompted the Wildlife Health Program to expand its surveillance and prevention program in 2022. The Wildlife Health Program received approximately 6,000 CWD sample submissions during the 2022 hunting season. As a result, the provincial testing capacity was overwhelmed and sample processing times were lengthy.

The Wildlife Health Program is implementing a number of process improvements in 2023 in an effort to reduce turnaround times for test results.



### Which Game Hunting Areas are included in the 2023/24 Mandatory Surveillance Zone?

- By law, hunters are required to submit CWD samples of mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk harvested from within the Mandatory Surveillance Zone. This includes the areas of Game Hunting Areas (GHAs) 5, 6, 6A, 11, 12, 13, 13A, 18, 18A, 18B, 18C, 22, 23, 23A, 27, 28, 29, 29A, 30, 31, 31A, 32, 33, 35, and 35A (refer to *Mandatory Surveillance Zone Map* below).

### What process improvements are being made for the 2023/24 hunting season?

- Regulatory Changes
  - **Hunters will have the option to extract and submit the testable tissue sample themselves.** Previously, hunters were required to submit the entire head and upper neck of deer and elk. Hunters are now encouraged to process CWD samples themselves. Testable tissue samples include:
    - Medial retropharyngeal lymph nodes and lower jaw of mule deer and white-tailed deer.
    - Brain stem (obex) and lower jaw of elk.
  - **Mandatory submission periods for hunters will be extended from two days to seven days.** This accommodates for the additional time it takes to extract and process the tissue samples.
  - **Remove the requirements for Bovine TB testing,** Manitoba has been considered free of Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) since 2016; therefore, the need for hunters to submit samples to test for this disease is no longer necessary. The Wildlife Health Program can focus its resources on CWD surveillance and management.
- Staffing capacity (Wildlife Branch)
  - **One new full-time Wildlife Health Biologist position and five seasonal Lab Technician positions have been created in the Wildlife Branch to assist with handling and processing the volume of samples submitted during the 2023 hunting season.**



- Increasing partnerships with accredited external laboratories
  - **The Wildlife Health Program is expanding our partnerships with labs.**
  - This is to ease the pressure on the accredited facilities used in 2022 and mitigate lengthy turnaround times.
  - Accredited facilities within Canada are limited and were overwhelmed during the 2022/23 hunting season, resulting in slower turnaround times of test results.

## How can hunters help ensure the health of Manitoba's wild cervid population?

- Participate in Manitoba's CWD surveillance program! Hunter participation in disease monitoring programs is critical to the long-term management of CWD and in protecting deer, elk, moose, and caribou populations in Manitoba.
- Be prepared to provide all information required to fill out the Wildlife Sample Receipt Form. This includes:
  - Date of kill
  - Exact location of the kill (GPS coordinates or a legal land parcel location)
  - Your contact information
  - Your Hunting Licence Number and Tag Number
- Do not feed deer! Large groups of deer gathered at artificial food sources have a higher risk of transmitting diseases such as CWD.
- Report any sick deer, elk or moose to the TIP line.

For more information about CWD and Manitoba's response

Visit [www.manitoba.ca/cwd](http://www.manitoba.ca/cwd)

Email: [cwd@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cwd@gov.mb.ca)

To report signs of illness in wildlife, sightings of cervids with ear tags, illegal feeding sites, and locations where cervids are congregating near hay bales or feedlots, contact a conservation officer in the local district office or call the TIP line at 1-800-782-0076.





## CWD Mandatory Surveillance Zone Map



Figure 1. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Mandatory Surveillance Zone. Biological Samples from all mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk harvested within the Zone must be submitted to a drop-off depot within seven days of harvest.