

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Morgan Richardson, Director, Hunting and Game Management
Date: October 3, 2019
Subject: Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Prevention Measures – Draft Rule

Purpose:

Obtain approval of a proposed draft rule amendment to help prevent CWD being introduced into Florida.

Summary:

Of the species managed by the Commission, white-tailed deer are the most sought-after game species in Florida. Florida's estimated 187,000 deer hunters average approximately 4 million days in the field annually, contributing to the nearly \$715 million in expenditures generated by the hunting industry as a whole. Managing the state's deer herd includes monitoring for diseases that could have a significant impact on this valuable wildlife resource. CWD is believed to be the greatest disease risk to deer in Florida.

CWD is a fatal neurological disease thought to be caused by an abnormal protein called a prion that can sustain itself in the environment for long periods and under harsh conditions. CWD remains undetected in Florida since surveillance measures were initiated in 2002, but is currently found in 26 states, most recently detected in Mississippi and Tennessee. While early detection through active monitoring is critical, disease prevention is a priority. Currently, FWC regulations prohibit importation of live cervids (members of the deer family) and restrict the importation of whole cervid carcasses (except deboned meat, skins, clean skullcaps and antlers, and finished taxidermy mounts) from states known to be CWD positive. Field studies have documented that infected deer populations are significantly impacted by lowered adult survival rates causing decreasing population trends. Deer with CWD die at three times the annual rate of deer without the disease. Concerns and perceptions about human health risks associated with prion-based diseases (e.g., "mad cow" disease) may erode hunting participation in infected areas, dramatically influence management of wild deer, and negatively impact FWC's conservation efforts through decreased license sales.

To further protect Florida's deer herd from CWD, staff is proposing to:

Prohibit the importation of whole deer (or other cervid) carcasses or parts except de-boned meat or processed meat cuts (without bone), cleaned hides without the head, cleaned skull plates with antlers, cleaned antlers, finished taxidermy products, and cleaned upper canine teeth, regardless of the state's CWD status.

If the draft rule amendment is approved for both advertisement and final adoption, Commission staff will file the rules for adoption as allowed by s. 120.54(3) Florida Statutes, without further public hearing.

Staff will update the Commission on other ideas being considered including prohibiting the use and possession of products containing natural deer (or other cervid) urine or other biofluids when hunting, scouting, or otherwise attempting to attract wildlife; and Allowing free-ranging, non-native cervids in the wild to be harvested year-round.

Staff Recommendation: Approve proposed amendment to Rule 68A-4.0053.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter: Morgan Richardson, Division of Hunting and Game Management