

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Prevention Measures



Credit: Mike Miller

Draft Rule
October 2019



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Version 1

This report covers proposed amendments to Commission rules to chronic wasting disease (CWD) to Florida's wild deer. A full summary of a proposed rule change is included in the additional background material.

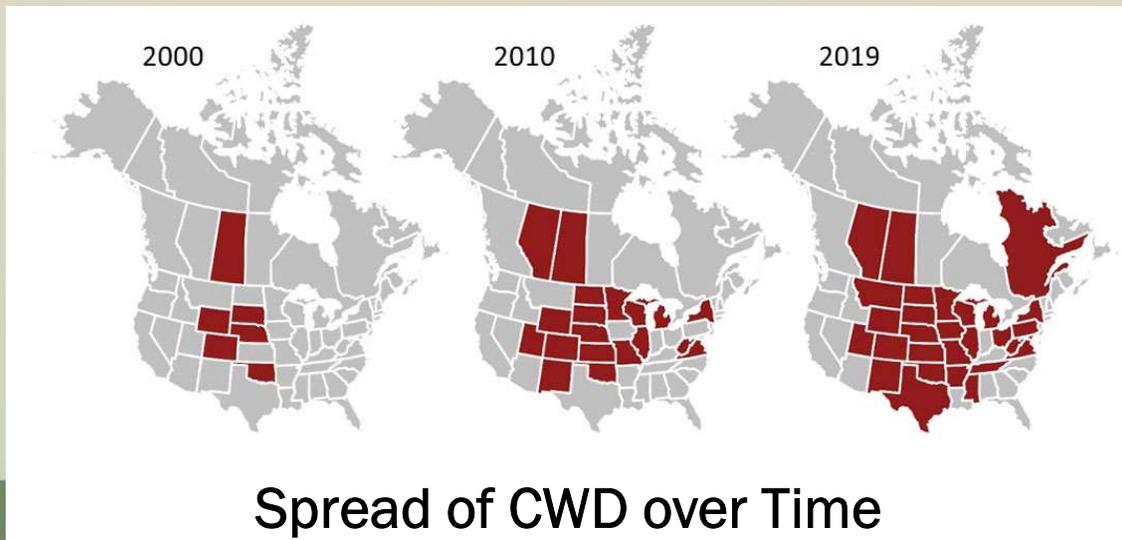
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History of CWD



CWD was first recognized in captive mule deer in Colorado in 1967 and may have been present in wild mule deer and elk even longer. CWD was found in wild deer in Wisconsin in 2002, the first time east of the Mississippi River. This prompted an intensive surveillance effort throughout the U.S. and Canada. Since then, additional CWD-positive wild and captive deer have been identified in numerous states throughout the U.S. Currently, CWD has not been detected in Florida but is found in 26 states, 3 Canadian provinces, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and South Korea.

Photo Credit: Cornell Wildlife Health Lab

What is Known About CWD

- Fatal Contagious Neurological Disease
 - Affects white-tailed deer and other members of the deer family
 - Caused by abnormal prion proteins (misfolded prions that do not contain genetic material and do not propagate or degrade like other infectious disease agents)
 - Similar diseases in sheep and cattle (scrapie and “Mad Cow Disease”)



Credit: Beth Williams



What is Known About CWD

- Transmitted through:
 - Tissues and bodily fluids
 - Contaminated environment
- Long incubation period
 - 2 to 4 years
 - Infected deer can appear healthy
- Signs of the disease
 - Weight loss, behavior changes, wide-based stance, tremors, lack of coordination, death
 - Always fatal



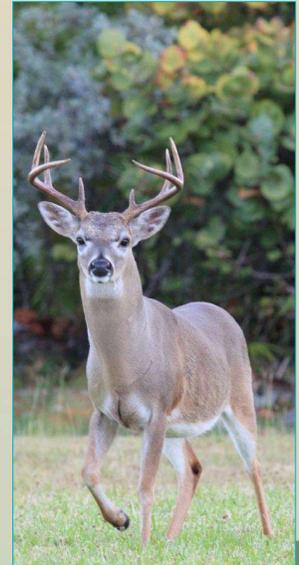
Why Taking Action is Important

- CWD is spreading
- Regional spread
 - Natural movements and dispersal
- Long-distance spread
 - Movement of captive deer
 - Movement of infected carcasses
 - Other ways (ex., predators/scavengers, deer urine lures)



Why Taking Action is Important

- CWD prevalence is increasing
 - Most recently detected in Mississippi and Tennessee
- Serious impacts on wild deer herd
 - Increased mortality
 - Long-term deer declines
- Hunter participation may decrease if disease is established (reduced conservation funding)
 - Perceived human health concerns
 - Decreased license sales



Current Measures Addressing CWD: Regulatory

- Importing carcasses from CWD-affected states prohibited in 2002
- Importing live members of the deer family into Florida prohibited 2013

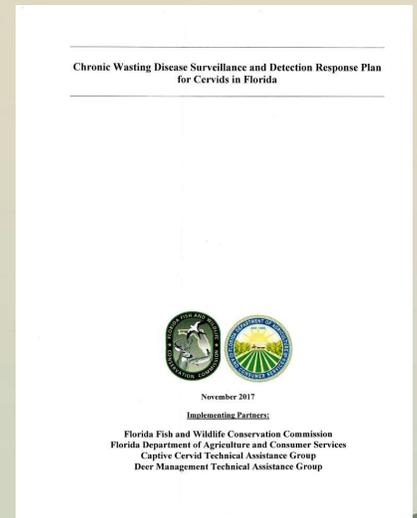


The FWC has implemented regulations to aid in preventing the introduction of CWD into Florida's wild deer herd. Currently importing whole deer carcasses is prohibited from CWD-affected states, but allows: boned out meat or processed meat cuts, hide with no head attached, antlers with a clean skull plate, finished taxidermy products, and upper canine teeth.

In 2013, the FWC passed a regulation (68A-4.0051, F.A.C.) banning the importation of any live cervid into the state of Florida to minimize the risk for CWD accidentally being transported into Florida.

Current Measures Addressing CWD: Monitoring and Response

- Statewide monitoring program implemented in 2002
 - Nearly 13,000 wild deer tested
 - Test sick, hunter-harvested, road-killed, and deer found dead of unknown causes
- CWD response and field operations plans
 - Comprehensive guidance for multi-agency response if CWD is detect in Florida
- Conducted multiple response exercises, planning mock field exercise



Additional Measures to Address CWD

(Draft Rule 68A-4.053, F.A.C.)

- Proposed rule would prohibit importing whole deer carcasses that originate from any state (except for):
 - Boned out meat or processed meat cuts (without bone)
 - Hide with no head attached
 - Antlers with a clean skull plate
 - Finished taxidermy products
 - Clean teeth



Additional Measures to Address CWD

(Discussion Item Only)

- Considering a ban on the use of natural deer urine
 - Problem: Most urine-based lures are produced in captive facilities; mixing with saliva and feces occurs
 - Prohibition would apply when hunting, scouting, or otherwise attempting to attract wildlife
 - Ban would not apply to use of synthetic deer scents/lures
 - Consistent with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recommendations for prevention



The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Best Management Practices for reducing the risk of CWD transmission and establishment of CWD recommends the prohibition of natural cervid urine use in the field. Even if the facility where deer urine is being collected is following health protocols and testing any sick or dead deer, the risk remains due to the long potential period of active shedding of prions.

Additional Measures to Address CWD

(Discussion Item Only)

- Allow free-ranging, non-native members of the deer family in the wild to be harvested year round
 - Problem: Non-native deer pose a threat to native deer through direct competition and possible introduction of diseases, including CWD
 - Non-native deer have escaped and continue to escape into the wild
 - Several breeding populations of non-native cervids in Florida



Non-native cervids were imported into Florida into captive facilities. Some have escaped their enclosures and pose a threat to native deer through direct competition for resources and through the possible introduction of diseases, including CWD. The CWD status of captive deer herds is unknown. Commission rules currently only allow free-ranging, non-native deer to be harvested under existing deer hunting regulations (seasons, bag limits, and antler point restrictions). Allowing these species to be harvested year-round without being restricted by existing deer hunting regulations would help reduce the number of non-native cervids currently in the wild and help prevent more from becoming established in the wild.

Feedback Received

- Three targeted stakeholder meetings hosted by FWC staff
- Online commenting initiated in September 2019
- Generally moderate to good support for proposals
- Low support for:
 - Restricting natural deer urine use
- Staff continuing to work with stakeholders to refine and develop proposals



Staff Recommendation

- Approve proposed amendment to Rule 68A-4.0053, F.A.C., for advertising in the Florida Administrative Register
- File for adoption if no hearing is requested
- Rule effective as soon as possible
- Provide direction to staff on other CWD preventative measures

