

Protecting Florida Deer from CWD



The purpose of this presentation is to provide background information about chronic wasting disease (CWD) in members of the deer family, and to discuss possible rule amendments designed to reduce the risk of CWD spreading into Florida.

About CWD

- Contagious disease of the brain and central nervous system
- Documented in deer, elk, moose, and caribou
- Always fatal

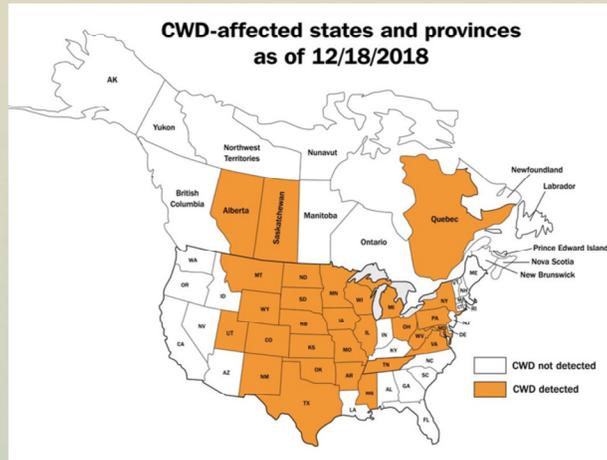


CWD, which has NOT been detected in Florida, is a contagious disease of the brain and central nervous system that is always fatal to members of the deer family. It has been documented in white-tailed deer, mule deer, sika deer, muntjac deer, red deer, moose, elk, and caribou.

CWD is believed to be caused by a naturally occurring protein called a prion that becomes misfolded. This abnormal prion resists being broken down by the body the way normal proteins are. When these misfolded proteins are introduced into a healthy member of the deer family, they multiply and begin damaging the animal's brain and nervous system. Signs of the disease usually appear 1 1/2 to 3 years after initial exposure so deer can look normal but actually have CWD and be shedding prions that can infect other deer.

CWD is characterized by extreme weight loss and abnormal behaviors such as listlessness, lowering of the head, inattentiveness toward people, walking in circles, staggering, and standing with a wide stance. Death usually occurs within 4 months of the onset of clinical signs, although some animals may survive for up to a year. CWD is invariably fatal once the deer is infected.

Where CWD Has Been Detected



CWD has been found in captive and/or free-ranging members of the deer family in 26 states, including most recently Mississippi and Tennessee. It also has been detected in the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Quebec, and Saskatchewan; and Finland, Norway, Sweden, and South Korea.

The FWC has been testing deer for CWD since 2002, and the disease has not been detected in Florida.

How CWD Is Transmitted

- Animal-to-animal contact
- Ingesting prions from soil contaminated by fluids, tissues or carcasses of infected animals



CWD can be transmitted through direct animal-to animal-contact as well as through contact with the saliva, urine, feces, blood and carcass parts of an infected animal. It can even spread through soil that has been contaminated with carcasses or any of the above fluids. Leaving CWD infected carcasses or carcass parts on the land can contaminate the soil as they decay, and the CWD prions can remain infective for years. Higher concentrations of deer increase the likelihood of disease transmission.

How CWD Is Spread

- Local spread
 - Natural deer dispersal
- Long distance
 - Transporting infected hunter-killed deer
 - Moving infected captive deer



CWD can spread in multiple ways. Locally, and even regionally, it appears to spread through the natural movement and dispersal of infected deer, elk, moose, and caribou.

Transporting hunter-killed deer with CWD also may spread the disease.

Moving infected captive deer, elk, moose and caribou is believed to be one of the primary ways CWD is spread over long distances in North America. Importing live deer, elk, moose, caribou, and other members of the deer family into Florida was banned in 2013.

Why CWD Is A Concern



- CWD is the most serious deer-related disease for conservation agencies
- No vaccine or cure
- Eradication difficult or nearly impossible
- Prevention and early detection are key



CWD is one of the most serious wildlife diseases facing state wildlife agencies such as the FWC. Computer modeling suggests CWD could substantially reduce infected deer populations.

Vaccines to prevent CWD have been ineffective, and there is no known cure for prion diseases. Preventing CWD from spreading into Florida is critical. Once CWD has been established, it is difficult to control the spread of the disease and virtually impossible to eradicate. Our focus must be on prevention and early detection through surveillance and subsequent rapid response if detected.

Should CWD be detected through the FWC's surveillance efforts, the FWC and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services have a joint response plan. The goal of this comprehensive plan is containing the disease within the area it was found. Early detection and rapid response before CWD prions build up in the environment is critical. Multiple management strategies will be used to control the spread of the disease, and this will likely include purposefully lowering the deer population in the infected area and setting regulations to control practices such as baiting and feeding, which artificially concentrate wild deer.

Approaches To Reducing Risk

- Monitoring Florida deer for CWD
- Education and outreach
- Regulations



Since 2002, FWC has tested over 14,000 hunter-killed, road-killed, and sick or diseased deer for CWD, and the disease has not been detected in Florida.

Hunters are being asked to support the FWC's efforts to monitor Florida deer for CWD by voluntarily submitting their deer heads for testing. In addition, hunters who harvest a sick or extremely skinny deer should avoid handling it and call the CWD hotline at 866-293-9282.

FWC educates hunters, landowners and the public about what CWD is, why it's a significant concern, what FWC and its partners are doing to reduce the risk, and how stakeholders can support those efforts.

To reduce the risk of CWD spreading, many states prohibit importing carcasses of hunter-killed deer from CWD positive states. Some states prohibit importing carcasses from all states. In addition, some states - but not FL - prohibit the use of urine lures and regulate the use of semen and embryos.

Carcass Movements

- Moving infected carcasses is a known risk for introducing CWD to new areas
- Best practice for reducing risk is prohibit importing whole carcasses and carcass parts from all states



Moving infected carcasses is one of the known risks for introducing CWD prions to new areas. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Best Management Practices for reducing the risk of CWD transmission via movement of carcasses and tissues of hunter-harvested deer is to prohibit importing intact carcasses (e.g. carcasses with spinal column and brain tissue) from all states and provinces.

Currently:

- 41 states limit importing high-risk cervid parts
- 17 states prohibit importing whole carcasses regardless of CWD status
- 17 states prohibit importing whole carcasses from CWD positive states/provinces
- 7 states prohibit importing whole carcass from CWD positive units only, not the whole state/province

Current Requirements To Import Carcasses Into Florida

- Executive Order 19-41 prohibits importing or possessing carcasses and parts thereof from all members of the deer family originating from any place outside of Florida except for:
 - boned-out meat or products thereof
 - clean hides with no tissue or head attached
 - antlers, antlers with a clean skull plate with no tissue attached or clean skulls with no tissue attached
 - finished taxidermy products
 - clean teeth with no tissue attached



Currently, Executive Order 19-41, which took effect Nov. 1, 2019, prohibits importing or possessing carcasses and parts thereof from deer, elk, moose, caribou and all other members of the deer family originating from any place outside of Florida except for de-boned meat; finished taxidermy mounts; antlers; and hides, skulls, skull caps, and teeth if all soft tissue has been removed.

Exceptions Allowed By Executive Order 19-41

- Legally harvested white-tailed deer originating from Georgia or Alabama are exempt, provided certain requirements are met.



The executive order allows exceptions for legally harvested white-tailed deer originating from Georgia or Alabama provided the person possesses an FWC Georgia/Alabama Carcass Importation Permit prior to the carcass being imported into Florida; reports the carcass importation within 24 hours of entering Florida using the FWC's online Georgia/Alabama Carcass Importation Reporting Form; and disposes of any remains using FWC-approved deer carcass disposal options.

White-tailed deer legally harvested from Georgia or Alabama properties that are bisected by the Florida state line and under the same ownership are exempt from the importation permit, reporting and disposal requirements.

NOTE: If CWD is detected in Georgia or Alabama, the exemption allowing deer carcasses to be imported would be rescinded for that state.

Summary Of Draft Rule Amendment

- Proposed rule amendment would prohibit importing or possessing carcasses and carcass parts of all members of the deer family originating outside of Florida



The purpose of this draft rule amendment is to revise regulations to prohibit importing or possessing carcasses or certain carcass parts of any species in the deer family (e.g. deer, elk, moose, caribou) originating outside of Florida. The effect of the proposed rule amendment would be to minimize the risk of chronic wasting disease (CWD) being introduced into or spread throughout Florida.

Exceptions To Draft Rule Amendment

- White-tailed deer harvested from properties in Georgia or Alabama if such property is bisected by the Florida state line and is under the same ownership
- Boned-out meat
- Clean hides with no tissue or head attached
- Antlers, antlers with a clean skull plate with no tissue or clean skulls with no tissue
- Finished taxidermy products
- Clean teeth with no tissue



Exceptions to this draft rule amendment include white-tailed deer harvested from properties in Georgia or Alabama if such property is bisected by the Florida state line and is under the same ownership. In addition, people could import into Florida de-boned meat; finished taxidermy mounts; antlers; and hides, skulls, skull caps, and teeth IF all soft tissue has been removed.

Contact Information

- Please report the location of sick or abnormally thin deer or deer dead of unknown causes to **CWD hotline at 866-293-9282**
- For more information and commenting options visit **MyFWC.com/Deer**

FWC Staff:

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We appreciate your willingness to participate in this meeting and look forward to working with the hunter conservationists in this state to protect our deer from CWD.