

Precautions for meat processors when handling deer that may have been exposed to CWD

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a contagious neurological disease that causes deer to die. CWD has not been detected in Florida. CWD can spread when deer consume prions present in soil contaminated with the feces, urine, saliva, other bodily fluids, or decomposed tissues of a CWD-infected animal. To protect your business, know and adhere to the following precautions:

Guidance for meat processors

- Possessing a whole carcass or head from any place outside of Florida is prohibited except for Georgia and Alabama, where special permitting/reporting requirements apply.
- Only accept: 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; or clean teeth with no tissue attached from any place outside of Florida except for Georgia and Alabama, where special permitting/reporting requirements apply.
- When handling any deer carcass, take the following steps:
 - Report any suspected importation violations to the Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-3922.
 - Minimize the handling of the brain, spinal tissues, and lymphoid tissues (e.g. tonsils, spleen, lymph nodes).
 - Wear latex or rubber gloves.
 - Decontaminate your equipment with a 50% bleach solution.
- Process animals individually. Avoid combining the meat from one animal with another.
- Ensure all customer contact information is captured.
- Double bag leftover deer parts and dispose of them 1) in a waste receptacle for collection by a waste disposal provider, 2) at a Class I landfill, or 3) by commercial incineration.
- Educate your customers with the following advice:
 - Do not shoot, handle or consume any animal that is acting abnormally or appears to be sick.
If you see or harvest an animal that appears sick, call the FWC CWD hotline, 866-CWD-WATCH (293-9282).
 - Avoid consuming meat from any animal that tests positive for CWD.

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About Chronic Wasting Disease

CWD, which has **NOT** been detected in Florida, is a contagious brain and central nervous system disease that is fatal to deer, elk, moose, caribou and other members of the deer family. This disease is caused by abnormal proteins called prions that accumulate in the brain and spinal column, causing irreversible damage and ultimately death. Signs of the disease usually appear 1 1/2 to 3 years after initial exposure so deer can be infected with CWD but look normal. Typically, 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.

Unintentionally transporting infected deer, elk, moose and caribou carcasses is a known risk for introducing CWD to new areas. CWD can be transmitted in different ways including direct animal-to-animal contact. It also can be transmitted indirectly. Members of the deer family can become infected when they consume CWD prions from soil contaminated with the feces, urine, saliva, other bodily fluids or decomposed tissues of a CWD-infected carcass. CWD prions persist in the environment and remain contagious for years. There is no evidence CWD can be transmitted to livestock or humans.

**If you see a sick, abnormally thin deer or
find a deer dead from unknown causes
call the CWD hotline at
866-CWD-WATCH (866-293-9282)
to report the location
of the animal.**

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