



**Importation of Captive Cervids
(Deer) – Draft Rule
June 2013**



**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Division of Hunting and Game Management**

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is proposing to prohibit the importation of live cervids (deer, elk and other members of the family Cervidae) with an exception that zoos could continue to move cervids by FWC permit. The primary purpose is to reduce the risk of chronic wasting disease (CWD) entering Florida. A prohibition on the importation of cervids could also help minimize the introduction of new strains of other diseases that affect native and captive deer such as epizootic hemorrhagic disease or blue tongue.

CWD Info by John R. Fischer, DVM,
PhD, of Southeast Cooperative
Wildlife Disease Study – University
of Georgia

[Dr. John Fischer will present technical information on
Chronic Wasting Disease. Several slides will be
added to cover this.]



Current Rules

- **FWC**
 - No whole carcasses can be brought in from CWD-positive states or provinces
- **FDACS**
 - Permit required for importation of deer
 - No live cervids may be imported into Florida unless they come from a captive facility with no CWD positive animals for 5 years
 - Deer farmers primarily responsible for reporting any potential cases of CWD and providing samples for testing
- **USDA**
 - Regulates, but still allows interstate movement



Bringing whole carcasses of any species of the family Cervidae (e.g. deer, elk and moose) into Florida from 22 states (Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming) and two Canadian provinces where CWD has been detected is prohibited. Only de-boned meat, as well as finished taxidermy mounts, hides, skulls, antlers and teeth with all soft tissue removed may be brought into Florida from these areas. Whole, bone-in carcasses and parts may be brought into Florida if they were from animals harvested from states and provinces where CWD has not been detected.

Live cervids (e.g., mule deer, white-tailed deer and elk) may not be imported into Florida unless they come from a captive facility certified by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) where no CWD-positive animals have been found for 5 years.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) introduced new regulations regarding the movement of captive deer in 2012. These regulations still allows interstate movement of cervids. Visit the [United States Department of Agriculture's Web site](#) for more information and state-by-state CWD reports.

CWD Surveillance in Florida

- Active surveillance of hunter-killed and road-killed deer and passive surveillance of symptomatic wild deer began in summer 2002
- As of April 2013, 6,999 deer have been tested, 335 from passive surveillance and 6,664 from active surveillance
- No deer have tested positive
- Plan to continue testing 600-700 free-ranging deer per year



Deer Farming Industry

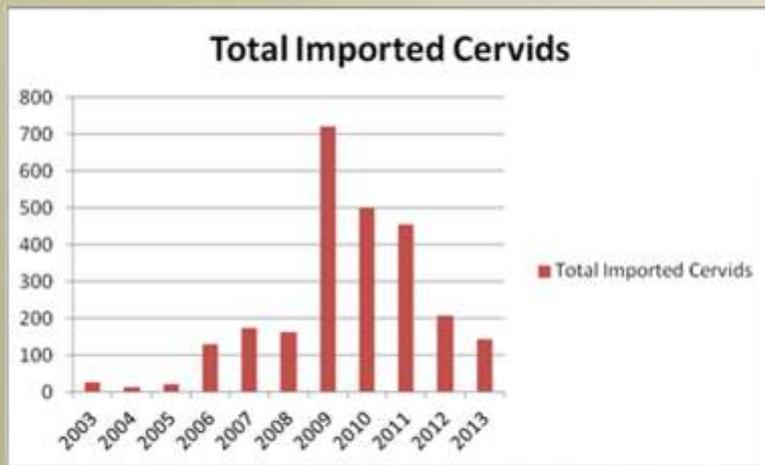
- Approximately 303 game farms and 93 hunting preserves in Florida possess live cervids
- In 2012, FDACS issued 44 permits for importation of 208 total cervids (182 white-tailed deer)
- Economics:
 - Cervid farming industry - estimated direct economic impact of \$893.5 million nationwide (2007 data)
 - By comparison, expenditures directly related to deer hunting in U.S. in 2011 were estimated at \$18.1 billion, and in Florida \$436 million



The captive cervid industry is the group most directly affected by a ban on importation of cervids into Florida from out-of-state sources. The captive cervid industry has been growing, mostly from new farms established to raise and sell animals commercially. Deer farms primarily sell to other deer farms or to licensed hunting preserves. There are approximately 303 game farms permitted in Florida that possess cervids, and a number of these have established breeding programs. There are about 93 hunting preserves with cervids permitted in Florida. Hunting preserve owners and deer farmers have indicated that they would be affected by a prohibition on importation because they would be limited to purchasing cervids from in-state farms. Under the proposed rule, genetic material (e.g., semen) could still be brought in and used for artificial insemination.

In 2007, a study conducted by Texas A&M University estimated the cervid farming industry had a direct economic impact of \$894 million nationwide. A study conducted by Southwick Associates estimated that in 2011, retail sales for deer hunting in the U.S. totaled \$18.1 billion with an overall economic output of \$39.9 billion. Although estimates of the economic impact of cervid farming in Florida are unavailable, based on the nationwide study, the number of farms in Florida and the historical numbers of cervids imported, banning importation of cervids is unlikely to have a significant impact on the industry or the economy of Florida as a whole.

Florida Importation Data



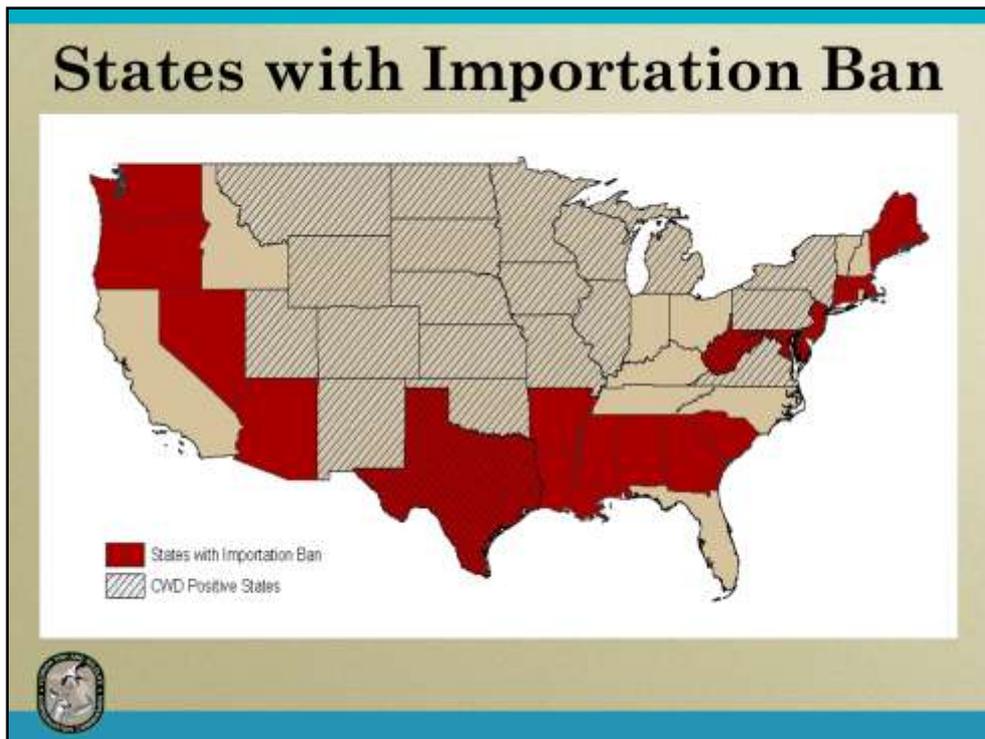
The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services issues movement permits to allow live cervids to be imported into Florida from out of state sources. The number of cervids imported increased in 2009 possibly in response to a stakeholder request to prohibit importation of cervids in 2009 that was eventually withdrawn from consideration by the stakeholder group that made the initial request. The 2013 numbers are numbers reported through early May.

Perspective

- What is at risk?
 - Health and size of Florida's wild deer herd and its ecological value
 - Economic benefit from deer hunting
 - Deer hunting and viewing opportunity for future generations
- A CWD-positive deer found in Florida likely would trigger
 - Quarantine of affected captive facilities
 - Increased testing
 - Deer population reduction zone
 - Ban on feeding deer



Per FWC's CWD Response Plan, a CWD-positive deer would trigger significant management actions to determine the prevalence and to reduce the risk and speed of spreading the disease. These would include a quarantine of affected captive facilities, increased testing, purposeful reduction of the wild deer population in the vicinity, a ban on feeding deer, and other measures. In other states that have CWD positive herds, the public costs for managing these infected populations have been in the millions.



Eighteen states currently do not allow importation of live cervids: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi (temporary moratorium), Nevada (does not allow captive farms), New Jersey, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas (does not allow any white-tailed deer or mule deer importation, but elk allowed under strict regulations), Washington (does not allow captive farms), and West Virginia.

Feedback

- Deer farming/preserve industry - split opinions, some support and some oppose
- A ban might increase illegal importation without oversight
- Could have negative economic impact on some farms/preserves
- Concern over private property rights
- Zoos - shouldn't apply to them
- Hunters overwhelmingly support
- Groups/organizations:
 - Support - Quality Deer Management Association, Florida Wildlife Federation, Florida Deer Association, Pope and Young Club, The Wildlife Society
 - Oppose - Southeast Trophy Deer Association



This slide summarizes the input and feedback staff has received on this proposal. The slide will be updated before the presentation at the June Commission meeting.

The segment of the deer farming industry that is opposed to the ban cites these concerns: increased costs of acquiring cervids because suppliers would be limited to Florida farms and slower growth of the deer farming industry within Florida.

Summary

- CWD is an always-fatal, brain degeneration illness occurring only in cervids (deer family)
- CWD has spread into additional states despite transport regulations intended to prevent the spread of the disease
- If introduced, CWD would have significant consequences for the captive deer industry and wild deer populations, negatively impacting hunting-related opportunities and economic contributions
- CWD has not been detected in Florida, and the best prevention is to cease importation of live cervids
- A ban on importation helps ensure robust and healthy deer populations for future generations—a good resource decision for Florida



CWD is an always-fatal, brain degeneration illness occurring only in cervids (deer family). The disease is spread from animal to animal contact and once the environment is contaminated with the prions that cause the disease, deer can become infected from these prions that are in the soil or elsewhere. The spread of this disease has happened, even where they had a permit program controlling importation. If introduced, CWD would have significant consequences for the captive deer industry and wild deer populations, negatively impacting hunting-related opportunities and economic contributions. CWD has not been detected in Florida, and the best prevention is to cease importation of live cervids.

Proposed Rule Language

68A-4.0051 Importation of Deer, Elk and Other Wildlife Species in the Family of Cervidae.

In addition to other requirements of Chapter 379, F.S., and Chapter 68A, F.A.C., and in order to prevent the introduction of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) into the captive and wild deer of this state, no person shall receive, possess, transport, or carry into the state by any means any live deer, elk or other species of the family Cervidae originating from out of state. Zoos that meet or exceed all applicable Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation standards (2013 Edition), which are adopted and incorporated herein by reference, may receive cervids, by permit, from out-of-state (except for white-tailed deer which may not be received from out-of-state) from another facility that meets or exceeds all applicable AZA accreditation standards, provided those cervids being moved are not commingled with cervids from other sources during the transfer. No person shall violate Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Rule 5C-26, F.A.C.



The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is proposing to prohibit the importation of live cervids (deer, elk and other members of the family Cervidae) with an exception that zoos could continue to transfer cervids from zoo to zoo by FWC transport permit provided both facilities meet Association of Zoos and Aquariums' accreditation standards. Zoos would not be able to receive white-tailed deer from out of state. FWC would utilize the existing permitting process already used for captive wildlife. The primary purpose of the proposed rule change is to reduce the risk of chronic wasting disease (CWD) entering Florida. A prohibition on the importation of cervids could also help minimize the introduction of new strains of other diseases that affect native and captive deer such as epizootic hemorrhagic disease or blue tongue.

Requested Action

- Approval to advertise the proposed amendments to 68A-4.0051 and file for adoption as soon as possible



MyFWC.com/Deer

Staff is requesting Commission approval to advertise the proposed amendments and file for adoption as soon as possible. If the rule amendments are approved for both advertisement and final adoption, Commission staff will file the rule for adoption as allowed by s. 120.54(3) Florida Statutes, without further public hearing.

Please continue to monitor MyFWC.com/Deer for updated information on deer management.