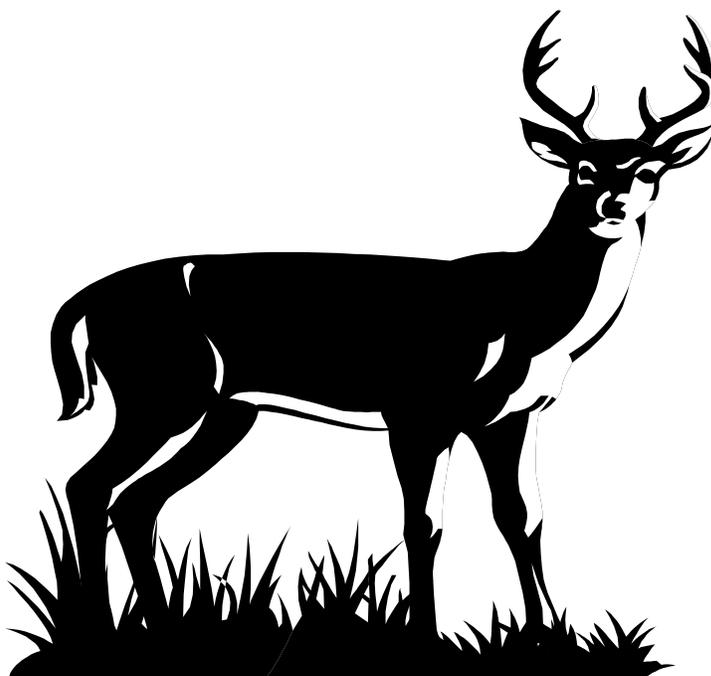




CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE RESPONSE PLAN



Division of Wildlife Management

Revised 2015

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ACRONYMS

APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
CWD	Chronic Wasting Disease
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
GIS	Geographic Information System
G.S.	General Statute
NCAC	North Carolina Administrative Code
NCDA&CS	North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
NCWRC	North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission
PSA	Primary CWD Surveillance Area
SCWDS	Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study
SEAFWA	Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
SSA	Secondary CWD Surveillance Area
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a contagious neurological disease specific to species within the deer (Cervidae) family, including white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus*), and others. The disease is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy and is characterized by spongy degeneration of brain tissue resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions, and ultimately death. CWD was first observed in the 1960s at a research facility in Colorado. While CWD poses a serious threat to cervid populations, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization have indicated there is no evidence CWD can be transmitted to humans or is linked to any neurological diseases of humans.

Purpose of North Carolina CWD Response Plan

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources commission has created a CWD Response Plan to identify and guide initial short-term (~ 12 months) efforts if CWD is detected in elk or deer in North Carolina or within 30 miles of its borders in any of its adjacent states. The plan outlines a general strategy for collecting prevalence and distribution information after the initial (index) case has been reported and it is a dynamic document that can be adapted to different epidemiologic scenarios.

CWD would have significant biologic, economic, and sociologic ramifications if discovered in N.C. CWD has not been detected in North Carolina. Discovery of CWD in Wisconsin prompted the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) to develop a preventative disease management strategy in May 2002. Revisions to administrative rules pertaining to captive

cervids were implemented, including testing, tagging, and inspection requirements as well limiting the importation of hunter killed cervids from CWD positive states to caped out and boned or quartered carcasses. A short-term buyout program was established to provide monetary compensation to licensees voluntarily relinquishing their cervid herds and captivity licenses to the NCWRC. Additional actions included increased efforts to minimize the occurrence of illegally-held cervids. Monitoring and surveillance for CWD were expanded for free-ranging white-tailed deer, including statewide systematic sampling of hunter- and vehicle-killed deer and sampling in the vicinity of captive cervid facilities known to have imported cervids into North Carolina. CWD surveillance and management actions for both captive and free-ranging cervids were initiated in 1999 and continue. Information has and continues to be disseminated to increase public awareness of CWD and disease management actions implemented by the NCWRC.

All management actions implemented by the NCWRC have been designed to prevent introduction or spread of CWD into North Carolina, or to increase the likelihood of disease detection should it already occur. Previous management actions related to CWD and the development of this plan were conducted in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) and the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS). SCWDS has also provided technical guidance relative to surveillance schemes and disease management actions. Annual surveillance will continue to include testing of all cervids exhibiting clinical symptoms characteristic of CWD. Herein, we outline the immediate and long-term responses the NCWRC will implement should CWD be detected

within or proximate to North Carolina. In the event of a positive diagnosis, the initial objective will be to identify the baseline prevalence and distribution of the disease.

To ensure maximum effectiveness of the NCWRC's response to a positive diagnosis of CWD, the CWD Response Plan is subject to revision as new information concerning CWD and appropriate disease management strategies become available. Any changes to the CWD Response Plan will be available on the NCWRC website (www.ncwildlife.org).

Goals and Objectives

Goal: Minimize occurrence and spatial distribution of CWD within North Carolina's free-ranging and captive cervid populations.

Objectives:

1. Implementation of a sampling strategy that will inform the NCWRC on the prevalence and spatial distribution of CWD in North Carolina.
2. Development of a CWD management plan to guide disease management activities in the area/s where the disease is found to be endemic.

GENERAL RESPONSE IF AN UNCONFIRMED POSITIVE IS DETECTED WITHIN NORTH CAROLINA OR WITHIN 30 MILES OF ITS BORDERS IN AN ADJACENT STATE

Upon notification of a CWD-positive sample from a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-approved laboratory, the NCWRC will immediately advise all agency personnel, the Governor's Office, North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR),

NCDA&CS, USDA Wildlife Services, SCWDS, and all member states of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) that a preliminary positive case of CWD has been found and that confirmation is being sought from a second, independent USDA-approved laboratory.

The following actions will immediately occur:

- Suspected positive samples will be sent to a second USDA-approved laboratory for confirmatory testing.
- The Chief of the Division of Wildlife Management will establish a Field Response Team and a Logistical Response Team. The Field Response Team will consist of the regional Private Lands Program Supervisor, District Wildlife Biologist, regional Engineering and Lands Management Supervisor, Deer Biologist, Wildlife Veterinarian, Permits Biologist, district Wildlife Enforcement Captain, and/or other individuals as deemed necessary to coordinate and conduct field response activities. The regional Private Lands Program Supervisor will serve as the Field Response Team Leader. The Logistical Response Team will include individuals in or near the NCWRC's headquarters in Raleigh and will consist of the Division Chief, Wildlife Veterinarian, Surveys and Research and Wildlife Diversity programs Supervisor, Administration and Planning Section Manager, Public Information Officer and/or other agency spokesperson to serve as media contact, Information Technology representative, Division of Law Enforcement representative, Raleigh Office administrative assistant, and/or other individuals from the NCWRC or other agencies as determined necessary to provide support for the Field Response Team. The Division Chief will serve as the Logistical Response Team Leader.

- The Field Response Team will determine the location of the unconfirmed CWD-positive sample (index sample) and will forward that information to all DWM senior staff. A map utilizing land ownership patterns, roads, waterways, and/or other land features to best delineate an approximate 5-mile (8-km) radius circle around the index sample will be prepared. Agency staff also will prepare maps indicating the cervid density distribution, captive cervid facility locations, previous CWD sample locations, and land parcel ownership information within the approximate 5-mile (8-km) radius circle around the index location called the Primary CWD Surveillance Area (PSA). A secondary 30-mile radius area will also be delineated surrounding the index location, and the 5- to 30-mile radius area will be called the Secondary CWD Surveillance Area (SSA). The PSA is calculated based on the estimated average dispersal distance for yearling males in North Carolina, and the SSA is based on the estimated maximum dispersal distance for yearling males in North Carolina.
- The Field Response Team Leader will determine the best location for a CWD operations facility, preferably a currently existing NCWRC facility. The Field Response Team and/or a local Division of Engineering and Lands Management crew will begin making necessary modifications to the facility that will enhance its function as an operations facility. Such modifications may include the establishment of an area for storing supplies and processing samples as well as an area to properly dispose of animal tissue.
- The Field Response Team Leader will appoint a data coordinator responsible for managing all data and samples that are collected. The CWD Data Coordinator, Deer Biologist, Wildlife Veterinarian, and a NCWRC Information Technology representative will collaborate to develop a data collection and management system. The data management system will

include an online component that allows hunters to check the testing status of harvested deer. The Wildlife Veterinarian will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate tissue samples are collected, datasheets are properly completed, all data are entered into an electronic database, and all samples are submitted for testing in a timely manner.

- The Field Response Team will finalize a list of all supplies and materials needed to conduct field activities and collect appropriate CWD samples from a minimum of 1,500 animals (estimated to be 50% of the deer population in a PSA with average statewide deer density). The supply list will be forwarded to the Deer Biologist and the Logistical Response Team, and a source for all items will be identified.
- The Logistical Response Team will establish a list of appropriate media contacts, draft a press release, develop an information section for the NCWRC website, identify stakeholders, and begin preparations for a public information meeting. Staff will be informed immediately of the positive test result, and informed to refer media/public questions to Public Information Officer.
- The Logistical Response Team will prepare a contact list with names and addresses of private landowners, captive cervid facility operators, and fawn rehabilitators adjacent to the index location.
- The Logistical Response Team will review and report on General Statutes, Session Laws, and other local laws that may affect the ability to discharge firearms for the purpose of collecting animals for CWD testing and/or the ability for lawful hunting to occur in the PSA and SSA.
- The Logistical Response Team will coordinate with a landfill close to the index location and the North Carolina Department of Waste Management to secure access to a disposal location

for carcasses, tissues, and other contaminated materials. If a cooperating landfill cannot be located in a location convenient for the Field Response Team, the Logistical Response Team will determine other appropriate means for disposal of materials associated with CWD sampling activities.

- The Logistical Response Team will identify options for carcass processing and disposal of carcass parts for hunter-killed deer harvested within the PSA and SSA.
- The Logistical Response Team will coordinate with North Carolina Department of Transportation to obtain permission to post notification signs along roadways entering the area delineated by the PSA and SSA.
- The Logistical Response Team will coordinate with appropriate USDA representatives and keep them apprised of all actions taken.

In the event the positive diagnosis is not confirmed, all previously-mentioned entities will be notified and a press release will be prepared and distributed. No further actions will be taken.

**GENERAL RESPONSE IN THE EVENT A CWD-POSITIVE DIAGNOSIS IS
CONFIRMED BY A SECOND, INDEPENDENT, USDA-APPROVED LABORATORY**

- The NCWRC will immediately advise all agency personnel, the Governor's Office, DENR, NCDA&CS, USDA-Wildlife Services, SCWDS, and all member states of the SEAFWA that the positive case of CWD has been confirmed.
- The public will be informed of the confirmed positive CWD case in North Carolina, by the following means:

- Within 8 hours of a confirmed case of CWD in North Carolina, the Logistical Response Team will identify a staff member to finalize the drafted press release and coordinate information distribution, most likely the Wildlife Management Public Information Officer. The CWD information section will also be placed on the NCWRC website.
 - Within 48 hours of confirmation of a case of CWD in North Carolina, the media will be advised, via press release, of the case. The press release will identify a spokesperson for media interviews and questions. The press release will be distributed on www.ncwildlife.org, via e-mail, via e-mail newsletters and posted on social media outlets.
 - Within 48 hours, a public information meeting will be set, organized by the Logistical Response Team. Details of the public meeting will be shared via a second press release and social media outlets
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- The Wildlife Veterinarian and the Logistical Response Team will immediately procure the items requested by the Field Response Team and have them delivered to the CWD Operations Facility.
 - The Wildlife Veterinarian and Deer Biologist will determine necessary sample collection sizes for the PSA and SSA based on estimated regional deer abundances. The Logistical Response Team will contact PSA landowners and stakeholders and conduct a public

information meeting within or near the PSA within 15 days of receiving confirmation of the positive test.

- The Logistical Response Team will send notification via mail to all captive cervid facility operators and fawn rehabilitators alerting them to the change in North Carolina's CWD status and the disease management actions our agency will be implementing.

FIELD RESPONSE IF CWD IS CONFIRMED IN A FREE-RANGING CERVID

Objectives:

1. Obtain tissue samples from 50% of the deer present in the PSA to determine CWD prevalence and distribution and to minimize disease transmission risk. Samples will be obtained through passive and active surveillance methods.
 2. Obtain a sufficient number of samples to detect at least 1 positive animal at 95% C.L when assuming a minimum of 100 positive animals within the SSA. This objective is designed to determine, as feasibly as possible, if CWD occurs outside of the PSA.
 3. Develop CWD Monitoring and Management Plans and long-term goals after initial response efforts have identified disease prevalence and distribution within the PSA.
- Wildlife Enforcement Officers will immediately begin securing access to private and public lands within the PSA.
 - The Field Response Team Leader will secure additional tissue sampling sources such as voluntary hunter submissions, hunt clubs, deer processors, taxidermists, depredation permits and other miscellaneous sources within both the PSA and SSA.

- If permission is granted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation, notification signs will be posted along roadways entering the PSA.
- The Field Response Team Leader and the Permits Coordinator will coordinate the immediate inspection of all captive cervid facilities within the PSA. The inspection will include a herd inventory, evaluation of the perimeter fence, and a visual evaluation of all captive animals to ensure no individuals are exhibiting symptoms characteristic of CWD.
- If confirmation of a positive occurs outside of the muzzleloader/gun deer season, an appropriate number of sampling teams consisting of a driver, spotters, shooters and carcass/data collection personnel will be assembled within 2 weeks to begin the collection of animals for CWD testing. At least one individual of each sampling team should be qualified as a shooter according to NCWRC guidelines. Sampling teams will begin operation after the public information meeting is held and will continue until the next muzzleloader deer season opens in the PSA. Sampling teams will not continue collecting animals for CWD evaluation during the muzzleloader and firearm deer seasons unless it is determined the PSA cannot be effectively hunted by licensed hunters, as determined by land ownership and use characteristics, local law restrictions, or other factors within the PSA and SSA.
- Sampling teams will not be activated if confirmation of a positive CWD diagnosis coincides with the muzzleloader/gun deer season unless, as mentioned above, it is determined the PSA cannot be effectively hunted by licensed hunters. Contacts will also be made with various enforcement agencies (state, county, local), North Carolina Department of Transportation, and other cooperating entities to establish a network of individuals to report vehicle-killed deer for testing.

- A mandatory hunter check station will be established by the Executive Director near the center of the PSA, and multiple mandatory hunter check stations will be established within the SSA, during the muzzleloader/gun deer season following or coinciding with the confirmation of a positive CWD diagnosis. The mandatory hunter check stations will be operated during a minimum of one full muzzleloader/gun deer season, plus the remaining partial season in the event confirmation of the index sample diagnosis coincides with an ongoing muzzleloader/gun deer season. The Field Response Team Leader will assign NCWRC permanent, contract, or temporary employees to operate the check stations. All hunters checking a deer will receive a harvest authorization number, and each deer will be affixed with a numbered identification tag. The initial objective within the PSA will be to sample all deer that are harvested throughout the duration of one full muzzleloader/gun deer season, including any partial season from the previous year if CWD was confirmed while that season was ongoing. The initial objective within the SSA will be to sample enough deer to meet the established sampling objective. Check stations within the SSA will be closed if/when the sampling objective is achieved. Samples collected by the sampling teams or at the mandatory check station will be processed and forwarded weekly to the Wildlife Veterinarian. The Wildlife Veterinarian will ensure all data are entered into an electronic database and forward the samples to a USDA-approved laboratory for CWD evaluation. Testing results will be available to hunters through the NCWRC website or by calling a dedicated telephone number.

If additional cervids are found to be CWD-positive, the PSA and SSA will be enlarged to accommodate the new positives and the sampling strategy will be adapted to the increased size

of the surveillance areas. If a CWD positive occurs outside the primary and secondary areas, it will be treated as a new outbreak and the response plan will be initiated for that outbreak.

- Hunters harvesting deer outside of the established PSA and SSA, and hunters harvesting deer during archery season or after closure of mandatory check stations, can transport a harvested deer carcass or head to any NCWRC depot or other designated testing site for CWD testing. The location of NCWRC depots and other testing sites will be listed on the NCWRC website (www.ncwildlife.org) in the event the CWD Response Plan is implemented.

FIELD RESPONSE IF CWD IS CONFIRMED IN A CAPTIVE CERVID

The following response actions will be implemented if CWD is detected in a captive cervid facility within North Carolina, or if a captive cervid facility within North Carolina has within the past 5 years transferred cervids to or received cervids from an out-of-state captive facility in which CWD has been detected.

- A meeting will immediately be held with representatives of the NCDA&CS and the Logistical Response Team, including the State Veterinarian, to coordinate all actions that will affect captive cervid facilities.
- The CWD-positive captive cervid facility may be quarantined immediately by NCDA&CS, and all cervids may be euthanized and tested for CWD. At the discretion of the USDA and contingent upon the availability of USDA funding, the captivity licensee may receive indemnity for all cervids removed. No state funds will be used to indemnify captivity licensees.

- Traces of cervids moved to and from the CWD-positive facility will be conducted to include a time span of at least 5 years. Captive facilities within North Carolina that transferred cervids to or received cervids from the index facility may be quarantined, inspected, and when deemed necessary by the State Veterinarian and NCWRC Executive Director, depopulated. At the discretion of the USDA and contingent upon the availability of USDA funding, the captivity licensee for any depopulated facilities may receive indemnity for all cervids removed. The indemnity cost will be based on the average market value for the species held in captivity, or based on value as determined by the USDA. No state funds will be used to indemnify captivity licensees.
- The owner of a captive cervid facility in which an animal tests positive for CWD will be required to develop a NCDA&CS- and NCWRC-approved facility management plan to minimize the potential for free-ranging cervids to come in contact with infectious materials and locations that may exist within the facility after depopulation. The facility management plan shall include provisions for disinfecting the facility and maintaining the perimeter fence.
- Field response activities for free-ranging cervids in the area of a CWD-positive captive cervid facility will occur just as if the captive facility represented a confirmed positive diagnosis in a free-ranging cervid. A PSA and SSA will be established and all of the field response activities described previously for free-ranging cervids will be implemented.
- If CWD is confirmed in a free-ranging cervid that is traceable to a captive cervid facility, a PSA and SSA will be established around the location of the CWD-positive animal and all cervids within the captive facility may be euthanized and tested for CWD. If CWD is confirmed within the facility, a PSA and SSA will also be established around the affected

facility and the management actions described previously pertaining to confirmation of CWD within a captive cervid facility will be implemented.

FIELD RESPONSE IF ILLEGAL CERVID CARCASS PARTS OR CARCASS PARTS FROM A CERVID KNOWN TO HAVE CWD ARE IMPORTED INTO THE STATE

In 2007 the NCWRC implemented a carcass importation rule that restricts the importation of cervid carcasses and certain cervid carcass parts from states or provinces with CWD (15A NCAC 10B .0124). In the event the NCWRC becomes aware of the importation of illegal cervid carcass parts, or the importation of carcass parts from a cervid known to have CWD, the Divisions of Wildlife Management and Law Enforcement will investigate the circumstances of the importation and, if determined to be warranted, all carcass parts will be confiscated and properly disposed of. An evaluation of possible environmental contamination will be conducted and, if determined to be necessary and possible, efforts will be taken to minimize the likelihood that cervids will acquire CWD from the affected environment.

FIELD RESPONSE IF CWD IS DETECTED WITHIN 30 MILES OF NORTH CAROLINAS' BORDERS IN AN ADJACENT STATE

The NCWRC will coordinate with the state wildlife and/or agriculture agency in the adjoining state where CWD has been detected. An attempt will be made to obtain the following information from the adjacent state: location of the index animal, the state's planned management and surveillance response, the location of all captive cervid facilities, the location

of all previously-collected CWD samples, and information concerning deer density and distribution in the area of the index animal.

If the index location is within 30 miles of the North Carolina border, a PSA and SSA will be established. Coordination will occur with the adjacent state to determine how the previously-mentioned field responses should be applied to the portion of the PSA and SSA located within North Carolina and adjoining States.

REGULATORY ACTIONS INITIATED IF CWD IS CONFIRMED FROM A FREE-RANGING OR CAPTIVE CERVID WITHIN OR PROXIMATE TO NORTH CAROLINA

The Executive Director, under authority of North Carolina General Statutes and Administrative Code or as delegated to him by the Wildlife Resources Commission or the Governor by virtue of an Executive Order, may initiate actions, regulatory and otherwise, within both the PSA and SSA to:

- Prohibit the rehabilitation or transfer of fawns or elk calves.
- Regulate supplemental feeding and baiting of wildlife.
- Establish mandatory harvest reporting at a check station during the muzzleloader/gun deer seasons.
- Establish mandatory CWD testing of all legally-harvested deer.
- Liberalize season lengths and bag limits, or otherwise implement modifications to season frameworks and regulations, as determined to be necessary to facilitate sample collections and population reduction.

- Regulate exportation of cervid carcasses or carcass parts from PSA and SSA to reduce the potential of spreading infectious tissues outside said areas. Facilitate and enforce proper disposal of carcasses and carcass parts to reduce the potential for further infections within the surveillance areas.
- Prohibit all transportation of captive cervids, regardless of any herd certification program implemented by the NCWRC, NCDA&CS, and/or USDA.
- Increase wildlife enforcement presence to ensure the above regulatory actions, as well as all other wildlife-related laws, are strictly enforced.

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