

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE – Update 10th July 2017

The situation in America, Norway, and the UK

The situation in America

The disease has now been active for 50 years, first noted in Colorado and now widespread across the North American continent.

The disease is monitored and managed by each State independently and in differing ways. Only one State has managed to curtail the disease's development, in all other infected States the disease is spreading and worsening and intensifying.

There was a period when it was thought that the disease wouldn't have visible impact, this is no longer the case. In some areas the disease is definitely now controlling populations as mortality is greater than recruitment.

The methods used to reduce CWD include prohibitions of live animal transport, or release. Surveillance, testing and monitoring of culled animals post mortem indicates the presence and intensity of the disease. Organised population reduction culls definitely reduce the rate of infection and prohibition of activity which encourages high densities at specific feeding, or salt lick sites reduce the inter-animal infection to an extent. Contamination of the land and herbage is of increasing interest, but there is little that can be done to sterilise the soil and plants, bush fires are unlikely to reach adequate temperatures to kill the prion.

Recommendations to hunters in USA

With the growing media attention given to Chronic Wasting Disease, many hunters are asking if they should continue to hunt in areas where CWD has been identified, and to eat the deer and elk they harvest from those areas.

In areas where CWD occurs, only a relatively small number of animals are infected. Even in the parts of Wyoming and Colorado where chronic wasting disease has existed for at least 30 years, an average of less than six percent of deer are infected. Infection rates in affected deer herds in Colorado vary from less than 1 percent to 13 percent. CWD is far less prevalent in elk than deer. Less than 1 percent of elk found in areas where the disease occurs in northeastern Colorado are infected.



There is currently no scientific evidence that CWD has or can spread to humans, either through contact with infected animals or by eating meat of infected animals. The Center of Disease Control has thoroughly investigated any connection between CWD and the human forms of TSEs and stated “the risk of infection with the CWD agent among hunters is extremely small, if it exists at all” and “it is extremely unlikely that CWD would be a food borne hazard.”

However, public health officials advise caution and recommend that human exposure to the CWD infectious agent be avoided as they continue to evaluate any potential health risk. Hunters are encouraged not to consume meat from animals known to be infected with CWD. In addition, hunters should take certain precautions when field dressing and processing deer or elk taken in areas where CWD is found.

Simple Precautions Advised

Public health and wildlife officials advise hunters to take the following precautions when pursuing or handling deer and elk that may have been exposed to CWD:

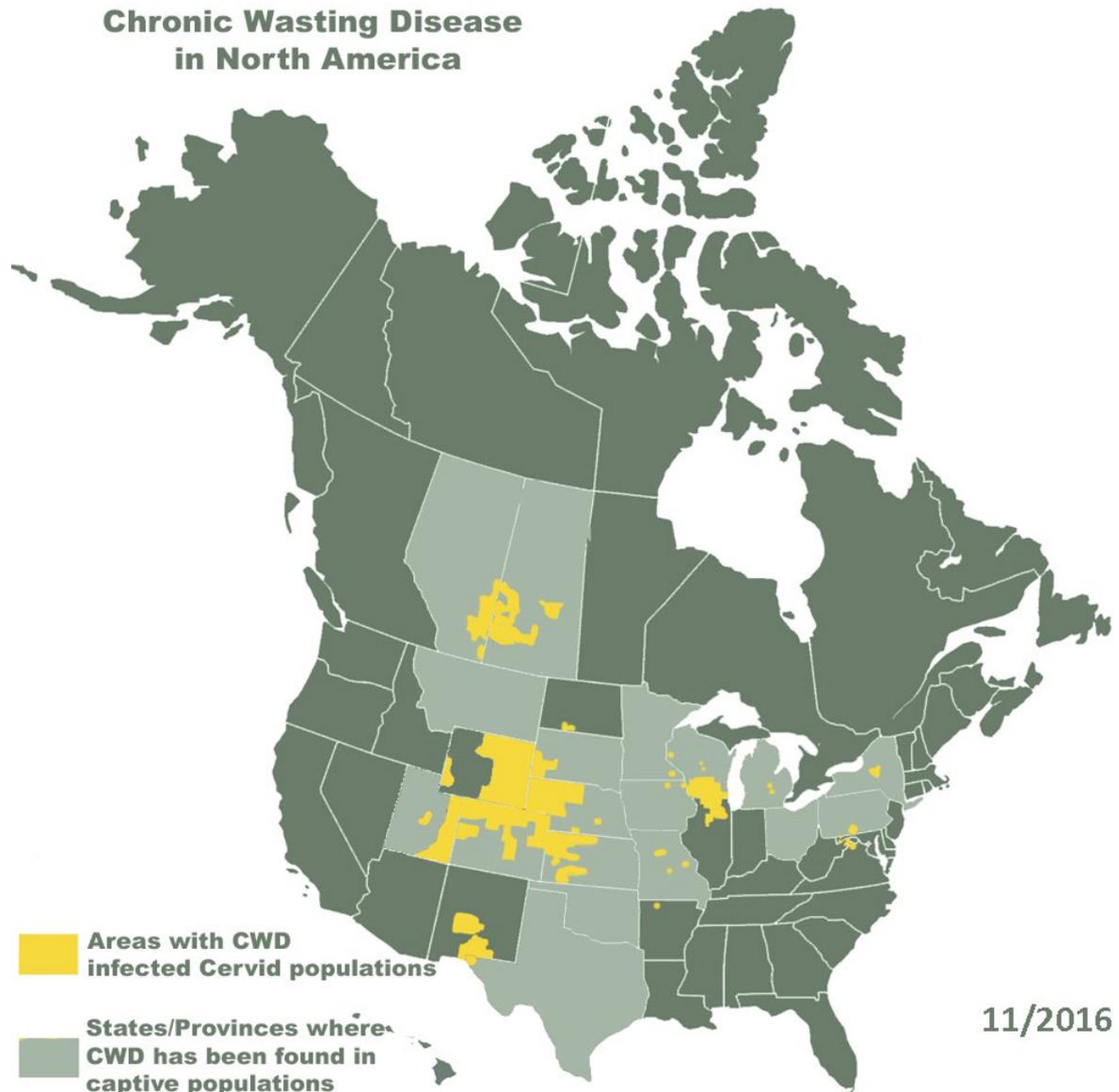
- Do not shoot, handle or consume any animal that is acting abnormally or appears to be sick. Contact your state game and fish department if you see or harvest an animal that appears sick.
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when field dressing your deer or elk.
- Bone out the meat from your animal. Don't saw through bone, and avoid cutting through the brain or spinal cord (backbone).
- Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing is completed.
- Avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out a carcass will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes.)

- Avoid consuming the meat from any animal that tests positive for the disease.
- If you have your deer or elk commercially processed, request that your animal is processed individually, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your animal.



The symptoms are not directly detectable, but the secondary symptoms include: Weight loss, lethargy, loss of fear, salvation, excessive drinking.

Chronic Wasting Disease in North America



Advice to international travellers remains the same, consider the risks of accidentally returning with contaminated gear or clothing or footwear and consider taking well used, nearly worn out clothing and kit with a plan to dump it after hunting in America.

The situation in Norway

In 2016 several cases of deer showing symptoms of TSE were diagnosed as CWD. 3 reindeer from one isolated herd found in Nordfjella were found to have CWD and two Elk had a similar but distinctly different type of TSE.

In 2017 a fourth reindeer, of the same herd, was found when live tested, intestinal lymph nodes were tested for CWD and found to be infected, the animal had been fitted with a telemetry collar and will be found and despatched imminently.

The Norwegian State Vet service undertook a risk analysis of the infected reindeer herd and recommended to the Government that the herd be culled and the area prevented from re-colonised for an extended period. The reasoning for the decision is well explained in the report, "CWD in Norway – a state of emergency for the future of cervids (Phase II)". We await the decision of the Norwegian Government.

The reason a cull of reindeer is recommended while not Elk is interesting. The reindeer which are infected are contained to a high plateau from which they do not readily migrate, nor do others migrate in, so the cull if achieved will remove the carriers completely. The Elk however live isolated in more accessible terrain, so a total cull is not practicably possible in any case

The prohibition of trade or movement of deer from Norway remains, as does the use of feeding stations or salt licks.

The situation in UK

The State Vet service has been well primed and has taken several steps to increase the recording of reindeer movements into and across UK, reindeer are being monitored for general health as their propensity to degenerate from parasites, stress and malaise in UK is well noted.

The deer sector is increasingly well informed of the disease.

The British Deer Society is vigilant and determined to keep information available on its website, to keep informed by communicating across the sector, and to encourage risk assessments to consider deer culls to reduce the speed and spread of the disease should it arrive in UK.

The Society has sponsored the Roslin Institute to research UK deer DNA to see if there is any evidence of previous exposure to TSE, should evidence be found it may indicate that that strain of deer has a degree of reduced susceptibility, or even perhaps resistance to the disease. The scientists will then, under high security laboratory conditions, use CWD prions to infect the DNA of the UK deer, the speed and intensity of the disease development will be recorded in the hope of finding a strain of deer which show a degree of resistance to the disease.

The BDS ran a survey of interest into deer urine lure use in UK and discovered that deer urine was being imported from USA, as well as elsewhere and also that synthetic urine lures

are available. The results of the survey convinced the EU vets to move to prohibit the importation and use of deer urine lures into and within EU.

The British Deer Society has been monitoring CWD in North America and has established connections throughout the scientific world on this topic, the Society is well informed and well connected, it will bring news on this event to you as soon as it is available, meantime we propose that we should all maintain our duty of care, and responsibilities if travelling around the world by being as hygienic as possible with our outdoor clothes and footwear and by minimising traffic in un-proven disease free animals or their body parts.