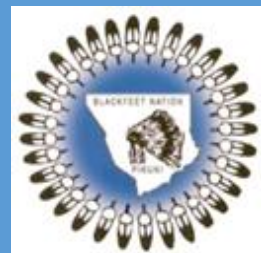




Chronic Wasting Disease

Fact Sheet



What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)?

- Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a prion disease which is a unique family of diseases caused by a malformed protein. It is 100% fatal once contracted!!!
- CWD infects animals in the Cervid family (deer, elk, moose, and reindeer).
- The malformed prion protein accumulates in the brain and other tissues causing neurological signs, emaciation, and death. Once clinical signs are observed the disease is always fatal.

How is CWD transmitted?

- Abnormal prions are shed in saliva, urine, feces, blood, and antler velvet from infected hosts.
- The carcass of an animal that has died of CWD is also highly contaminated with infectious prion.
- Transmission occurs by direct contact with live infected animals or indirectly through contact with contaminated environments.

How can you tell if a deer has CWD?

- Infected Cervids lose weight and body condition, resulting in emaciation and death.
- Neurologic signs and behavior changes include depression, altered gait, head tremors, teeth grinding, excessive-salivation, difficulty swallowing, circling, lowering of the head, drooping of the ears, shaggy coat, and isolation from other animals.

How soon after CWD exposure do signs of disease appear?

- Depending on the host species, the incubation period may be as short as 12 months but is often much longer (2 years). At which time up to 40% of the herd may be already infected.
- Animals do not show signs of illness until they have been infected for a number of months. During this time the animal can be shedding infectious prions. Since it is difficult to diagnose the disease during incubation, management options are limited.

Are prion diseases transmissible to humans?

- At this time there is currently no evidence that CWD can infect humans or domestic animal species. However, it is strongly recommended that tissues from CWD infected animals not be consumed.

What can hunters/the public do?

- Hunters should report any suspected cases of CWD to BFWD personnel immediately. BFWD personnel can be contacted by calling this toll-free number **(406) 885-9412**. Early

detection of CWD in an area is vital to containing the disease

- to prevent it spreading to other areas of the state
- Accurately document the location of the animal (record GPS coordinates if possible), and take pictures if possible.
- Wear eye protection, and rubber or latex gloves when handling or processing carcasses.
- Avoid handling or cutting through the skull (brain) or spinal cord.
- Clean and soak knives and tools for one hour in a fresh solution of household chlorine bleach mixed with an equal amount of water (e.g., 1 quart bleach with 1 quart of water – a 50% solution), air dry, then rinse with clean water.

Can I have my harvested animal tested?

- Yes!!!! BFWD staff are available to collect tissue samples from hunter-harvested deer, elk, and moose throughout the year.
- If possible the head should be kept cool, not frozen, until the sample can be collected.

To learn more about CWD please follow the links:

- <http://blackfeetfishandwildlife.net/resources/>
- <https://cwg-info.org/cwg-overview/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/prions/cwg/>
- www.cdc.gov/prions/cwg/index.html
- www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/chronic_wasting_disease/index.jsp