Chronic Wasting Disease

Disease Characteristics

- Contagious infection with a prion
- Fatal disease of brain
- Long incubation period without signs of disease
- Signs are emaciation, excessive salivation, incoordination, lowered head and ears, blank expression, aimless walking
- First identified in Colorado, now in more than 18 states
- Prions persist in the environment
- Disease is transmitted by direct contact with an infected animal, contaminated environment, and possibly by consuming contaminated plants
- Susceptible species include mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, Sika deer, moose, and possibly reindeer/caribou
- Has not been documented to cause disease in people

Surveillance Efforts in Arizona

Program Objectives:

- To conduct hunter harvested and targeted surveillance of both deer and elk throughout the state of Arizona.
- To increase surveillance efforts in areas bordering CWD-positive states.

Method

- Surveillance based on risk for introduction
- Detection probable if disease is present in 1% or more of sampled population
- Assisted by taxidermists and meat processors

Results

- Has not been detected
- About 20,000 samples since 1998

Hunters can assist

- Bring in the head of their recently harvested deer or elk to any Game and Fish Department office between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
- Place the head in a heavy plastic garbage bag for delivery, and keep it cool and out of the sun.
- Please provide accurate, up-to-date hunter information (name and phone number) as well as hunt information (hunt#, permit #, game management unit harvested in, state, and hunt license) as this information is crucial should a positive CWD sample occur.
Prevent the introduction of CWD

- The Department is concerned that CWD might be inadvertently brought into our state through the transport of infected animal tissues.
- Arizona Game and Fish Commission Rule R12-4-305 allows an individual to possess, transport, or import only the following portions of cervids lawfully taken in another state or country:
  - Boneless portions of meat, or meat that has been cut and packaged;
  - Clean hides and capes with no skull or soft tissue attached;
  - Antlers, clean skull plates or skulls with antlers attached with no meat or soft tissue remaining;
  - Finished taxidermy mounts or products (hunters may ship their harvested animal to a taxidermist); and
  - Upper canine teeth with no meat or tissue attached
- Do not bring the brain, intact skull, or spinal column of deer or elk harvested in another state back into Arizona.

Safe meat handling

The following precautions should be taken when pursuing or handling deer or elk:

- Do not shoot, handle or consume any animal that is acting abnormally or appears to be sick. Contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department at 1-800-352-0700 if you see or harvest an animal that appears sick.
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when field dressing your deer or elk.

If hunting in a CWD positive state:

- 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.

Contact Information

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