

Summary of CWD Response Plan Actions

GEORGIA CWD RESPONSE PLAN

BACKGROUND

- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) affects members of the deer family.
- It is caused by an infectious protein that is spread among deer through bodily fluids.
- It is always fatal and there is currently no vaccine or treatment.
- Long incubation period, 18 to 24 months from exposure to death. One deer can infect many others.
- Once it is well established in an area (spread beyond a 1-mile radius), eradication is highly unlikely. CWD must be discovered early, while localized with a low prevalence rate for any hope of eradication.
- Importation of live deer is the largest risk factor for the introduction of CWD. Infected carcass parts from CWD areas also present risk.

ONGOING SURVEILLANCE EFFORTS

- Since 2002, DNR has tested over 10,000 deer. Sampling intensity increased in 2019 with the latest scientific developments and DNR currently collects about 1,500 samples per season.
- DNR uses a risk-based surveillance system designed for early detection of CWD. Sampling intensity in each county depends upon risk factors such as captive deer facilities, number of taxidermists and processors, past sampling effort, and distance to known CWD areas.

RESPONSE PLAN

Goal: Detect CWD early, determine the prevalence and geographic extent, and minimize spread (or even eradicate, if possible).

If CWD is discovered in Georgia (or within 5 miles of the state line)

- Establish a disease management zone in each county within a 5-mile radius around the positive sample.
- Sample intensively within a 1-mile radius to determine prevalence and geographic extent.
- Samples will be collected from hunter-killed deer at self-serve freezers placed around the management zone. Other sampling method may include sharpshooting, issuance of special permits, and testing road-killed deer.
- If local deer populations are over-abundant (e.g., over 50 deer per square mile), encourage increased harvest through regulation.
- Identify, sample, and quarantine any high-fence enclosures (deer farms involve GA Dept. of Agriculture) inside management zone.
- Implement deer carcass transport restrictions on management zone. The only parts approved for transport are boned out meat, hides, skulls or skull caps with antlers attached and all soft tissue removed (velvet antlers are okay), jawbones with no soft tissue, elk ivories, and finished taxidermy mounts.

Managing CWD in the long term if eradication isn't possible.

- Once initial prevalence and geographic extent of CWD are assessed, zones will be adjusted accordingly.
- The disease appears to form clusters of positives and intensive efforts to remove these clusters is critical to manage the disease. This surgical approach entails removing deer in the immediate vicinity of where a positive deer is found.
- Avoid large-scale intensive herd reductions. Maintaining good relationships with landowners and a huntable population of deer is crucial to the future of disease management.