



Chronic Wasting Disease



What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)?

CWD is a disease that affects the nervous system in white-tailed deer, mule deer, red deer, elk, moose and other cervids. It is one in a group of diseases called the transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, which include scrapie in domestic sheep and goats and bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle. The disease is caused by misfolded proteins (prions) that are replicated by host animals. Prions interrupt and degrade nerve cells and ultimately eliminate basic nervous system functions, resulting in death of the infected host. The precise origins of CWD are unknown, but the condition was first detected in 1967 in a research mule deer herd in Colorado. It has now been confirmed in 25 states and two Canadian provinces. CWD has not been detected in Louisiana, but cases have been reported from all adjacent states.



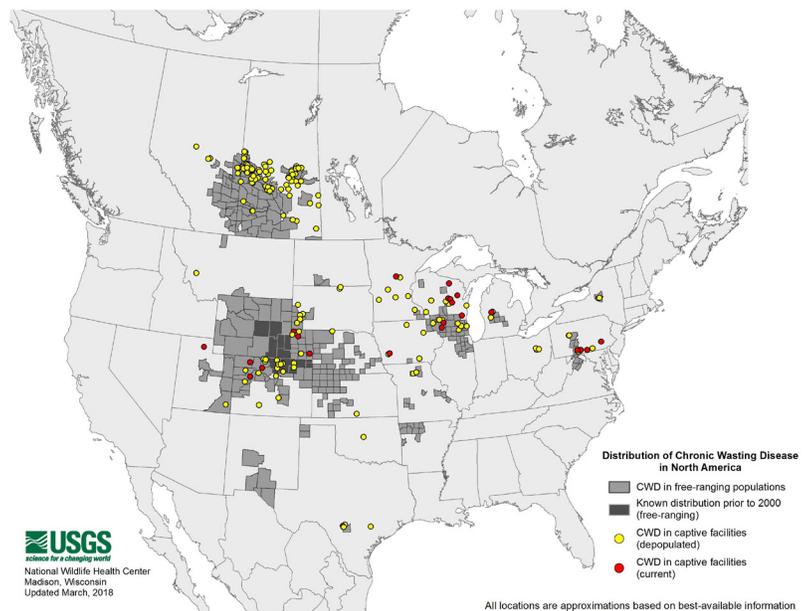
What are the symptoms?

- Emaciation or generally poor body condition
- Decreased activity or erratic behavior
- Wide, low stances and blank expressions
- Excessive drinking and urination
- Salivation and grinding of teeth

These symptoms appear 16 to 36 months after infection. Because these symptoms are common to many diseases, a positive diagnosis of CWD requires laboratory testing by a trained professional.

How is it spread?

CWD is spread among infected animals by direct and indirect contact with saliva, urine, feces or a carcass. These prion-carrying sources are deposited on the ground and in the soil and can be picked up by other animals during foraging. Reservoirs of prions in the environment (e.g., plants) may also enable transmission. Though mother-offspring transmission is possible, lateral transmission between two animals is the typical route for infection.



Source: https://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/images/cwd/cwd_map.jpg

Can CWD affect livestock or humans?

There is no evidence to suggest that CWD can be transmitted to traditional domestic livestock (e.g., cattle, sheep and goats) or humans. However, it is good to be cautious. Experts advise hunters to harvest only healthy-looking animals. Sickly looking animals should be assessed for disease and not consumed. Prions accumulate densely in the brain, eyes, tonsils, spine, spleen and lymph nodes of sick animals, so hunters should avoid touching or eating these parts. In areas affected by CWD, bone out carcasses in a way that removes all nervous system tissue. Be sure not to cut meat with saws or knives that were used to cut bone. To prevent exposing other susceptible animals to infected material, bury the carcass at least 6 feet deep or dispose of them in approved landfills.

What should I do if I see an animal that might have CWD?

- Do not attempt to touch, kill, or move the animal in any way.
- Carefully document the animal's location and any other pertinent details.
- Immediately contact the nearest Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) game warden or wildlife biologist who will obtain samples from the animal.
- Follow any instructions given by LDWF for follow-up.
- Continue to be vigilant for future cases of potentially infected animals.

What are the recommended treatment and prevention strategies for CWD?

There is no vaccine to prevent infection. Once an animal infected there are no effective treatments, but researchers are working to develop such tools. The best way to prevent the spread of CWD for now is to manage susceptible animal populations. The easiest solutions are to (1) remove and properly dispose of potentially infected animals, (2) prevent high densities of susceptible animals by continuing to hunt and harvest and (3) minimize places where susceptible animals congregate, such as feeding stations.

Adherence to carcass importation regulations — available online at <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/hunting/CWD> — is paramount to prevent inadvertently bringing CWD into Louisiana.

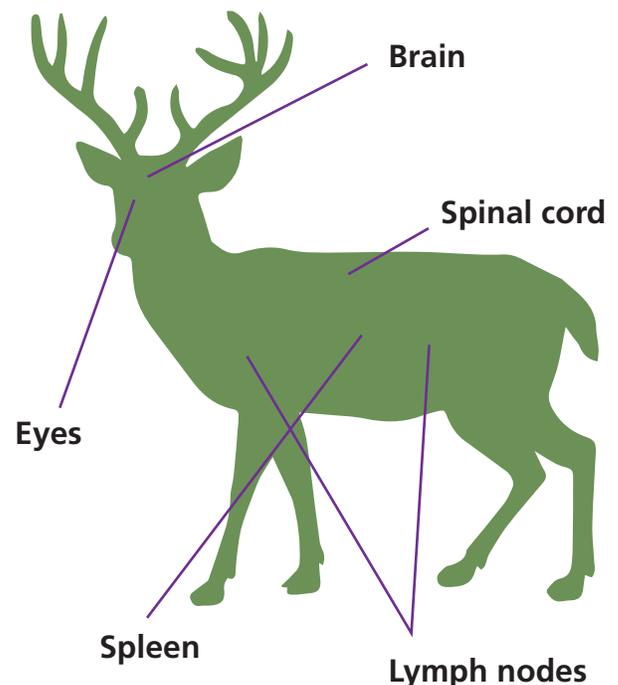
How can I help?

Prevention provides the best chance of minimizing the spread of the disease. The best way to help is to be vigilant and carefully follow any requests or regulations from LDWF. In addition, encourage your fellow Louisianans to remain calm and work to prevent the spread of misinformation.

Where can I find more information?

- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries www.wlf.louisiana.gov/hunting/CWD
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service <https://wildlife.tamu.edu/cwd/>
- Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance www.cwd-info.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/prions/cwd/index.html

Organs affected by Chronic Wasting Disorder (CWD)



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