Update on Chronic Wasting Disease in New Hampshire May 3, 2023
New Hampshire Game and Fish News

Concord, NH – New Hampshire's white-tailed deer population has once again demonstrated no evidence of chronic wasting disease (CWD), based on monitoring data gathered during the 2022 hunting season.

CWD is a neurological disorder that is always fatal to white-tailed deer, moose, and other cervids (members of the deer family). Currently it is not believed that CWD is transmissible to humans; however, hunters are advised not to consume animals that have tested positive for CWD.

New Hampshire Fish and Game Deer Biologist Becky Fuda recently received results from a federally certified veterinary diagnostic laboratory indicating that all deer tissue samples taken during the 2022 New Hampshire fall hunting season tested negative for CWD. In 2022, Fish and Game biologists collected 385 samples from hunter-killed deer, with significant support from the US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services in Concord. New Hampshire's monitoring program is part of a nationwide effort to slow the spread of CWD. Since the monitoring program began in 2002, 7,787 deer have been tested in New Hampshire.

NH Fish and Game is asking hunters to do their part in the effort to keep the state CWD-free by not using natural urine-based deer lures and following state restrictions on importing carcasses from CWD-positive jurisdictions.

Don't Use Urine-Based Lures

“While it is good news that New Hampshire remains CWD-free, we are asking hunters to help our herd by not using natural urine-based deer lures when hunting, because these products can potentially spread CWD,” said Fuda. Fish and Game recommends that hunters instead choose from among the many effective synthetic lures available on the market today.

The heart of the problem is that CWD is transmitted by an abnormal protein, also known as a prion. These abnormal proteins are very stable and may persist in the environment for several years, posing a risk to animals that come into contact with them. While most hunters use small amounts of these lures, continued application can have cumulative effects over time.

Studies have shown these prions are found in nervous system tissue, lymph nodes, saliva, urine, and feces, among other places. Urine for natural lures is collected from captive deer facilities outside of New Hampshire, many of which are located in states where CWD is present. In many cases, urine is collected from animals held in pens over grates, where a mixture of urine, feces, and saliva accumulates. The liquid portion is then strained out.

“Deer urine is not a regulated industry or product, and these lures do not undergo any quality control or treatment that might inactivate or kill disease-causing agents,” said Fuda.

Because of these risk factors, Fish and Game **strongly discourages the use of natural urine-based deer lures** while hunting. Several states and Canadian provinces have already banned the use and possession of natural urine-based lures. Further, evidence suggests lures are not as effective as marketing

campaigns would make hunters believe. A survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission found that hunters who used urine lures were no more successful in harvesting a deer than hunters who did not. A study from Austin State University found urine lures were no more effective at attracting deer than other non-hunting scents. The researchers put trail cameras on “mock deer scrapes” and monitored visitations by deer. They found no difference in the number of bucks that visited scrapes treated with urine lures vs. those treated with human urine or new car scent. They concluded that the scrape was a visual attractant and the scent was merely a curiosity factor for the deer.

CWD Spread

Chronic wasting disease was first identified in 1967 and remained isolated in Colorado and Wyoming for almost three decades. Since then, CWD has spread within the US and internationally, and has been found as far east as New York and Quebec, bringing the disease far closer to New Hampshire’s borders. To date, CWD has been detected in wild or captive deer in a total of 30 states and 5 Canadian provinces as well as in South Korea, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

Hunter-Killed Carcass Import Restrictions

Hunters who make hunting trips to CWD-positive jurisdictions are reminded that they must follow the mandatory regulations on bringing home deer, elk, moose, or other cervid carcasses to help keep New Hampshire CWD-free. You may legally bring back ONLY deboned meat, antlers, upper canine teeth, hides or capes with no part of the head attached, and finished taxidermy mounts. Antlers attached to skull caps or canine teeth must have all soft tissue removed.

Help our herd. To see a map of CWD-positive jurisdictions and find web resources about how you can help keep New Hampshire CWD-free, visit www.wildnh.com/wildlife/cwd/index.html.