A HUNTERS GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Prepared by Cait Nelson
Wildlife Health Biologist
Ministry of Environment
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Most hunters have heard of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

But do they fully understand it?
Have they been given the right information?

The following presentation is intended

• To inform BC hunters about CWD
• To dispel some common myths
• To discuss how to help and how to reduce the risk
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There are several common misconceptions...

Can cattle and sheep get CWD? NO

Can humans get CWD? NO

Can animals get CWD from the dirt? YES

Is CWD in BC inevitable? We will see...
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Let’s start with...

The Facts on CWD
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CWD is a “prion” disease that affects the central nervous system

Prions are abnormal proteins that attack cells in the brain which essentially leave holes in the tissue.

See image above of infected brain tissue under a microscope – CWD infected protein is coloured red.
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CWD is part of a family of diseases called "**Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies**" or TSEs.

BSE and **Scrapie** are also TSEs, but they are very different diseases.
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The only species susceptible to CWD are members of the Deer Family (aka: Cervids)

It has been found in...

Mule Deer  Elk  White-tailed Deer  Moose

Photos courtesy of Jared Hobbs
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What about Caribou, Reindeer and Fallow Deer?

Considered susceptible, but no positives in the wild or on farms...

research has not confirmed infection
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The History of CWD

- CWD is **not** a naturally occurring disease
- First seen in the USA in wildlife research facilities
- Imported to Canada (SK) via game farmed elk
- The disease has spread in Canada from captive to wild cervids - in some cases (SK) back to captive
Where does CWD Occur?

- BC's Highest Risk Zone
- Closest cases in wildlife to BC border
How many animals are affected?

In captive populations: the number of infected animals can be very high – animal density increases the chance of infection.

In wild populations: the number of infected animals is relatively low.

In Alberta and Saskatchewan less than 1% of hunted cervids test positive.
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Do all infected animals look sick? NO!

- Animals can be infected for years before showing signs
- In new areas of infection, CWD infected animals can be in good body condition and hunter killed

Photo: Jared Hobbs
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Is CWD in BC?

We don’t think so...

But we need to conduct surveillance and encourage research projects so we can learn more – only then can we confidently say...

“we don’t have it in BC!”
Is CWD in BC inevitable?

Experts say:

There are 2 ways CWD may enter BC...
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1) By natural animal movement
   - Chances are this would happen very slowly
   - BC is considered at LOW RISK for the natural introduction of CWD

2) By human importation of infected animals or parts
   - A very real threat
   - If you hunt outside of BC you need to understand the risks associated with bringing a potentially infected carcass back with you...
Can animals get it from dirt? **YES!**

**How do we know?**

New research shows that cervids can get the disease from prions in the soil ...

- After a carcass rots, prions can remain active in the soil for years capable of infecting another cervid

- Infectivity of prions can increase (up to 500%) when bound to certain types of soils

So, if you hunt outside BC – don’t take the chance – don’t bring the **“risky materials”** back to BC!
What are “Risky Materials”? 

The central nervous system: 
- Brain 
- Spinal Cord 
- Eyes 

Also... 
- Lymph nodes 
- Spleen 

A new regulation restricts the import of these parts into BC
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Can humans get it? NO!

How do we know?

Research shows that humans are not infected by CWD through direct contact with animals or through eating infected meat.

As a precautionary measure...

The World Health Organization recommends that people do not eat meat from cervids infected with CWD.
Can cattle, sheep, goats or any other domestic animal get it?  NO!

How do we know?
Research proves that under natural conditions transmission is not possible.
If BC gets CWD, will hunting be restricted? NO!

A common misconception is that if CWD is found in BC hunting will be restricted or shut down.

NOT TRUE!
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In CWD affected areas in both Saskatchewan and Alberta, hunting is highly encouraged through extended seasons and other incentives.

- Hunting needs to be used as a tool to reduce animal density and slow spread of the disease.
What do other CWD Programs do?

In High Risk CWD infected areas in Alberta and Saskatchewan...

• Head submissions are mandatory
• All harvested cervids are tested
• Hunters are informed of the results
• Huge resources are devoted to surveillance and research
How would BC respond?

if **CWD** is found here...
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First we need to confirm it
• If we know the kill location (provided by the hunter), MOE & the Wildlife Veterinarian will coordinate targeted sampling in that area

If another positive case is confirmed...
• The Provincial CWD Technical Working Group, (includes reps from BCWF and GOABC) will discuss the response and may advise a small professionally supervised cull within an area around the positive cases to reduce animal density and disease spread

The response will...
• Consider ongoing research and control methods used elsewhere
• Greatly depend on the specific circumstances (animal density, landscape, ecology, etc...)
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BC wildlife will always need your help!!!

An introduction could happen anywhere

We have a lot to learn about this disease

There are lots of challenges

We need your support to act efficiently and effectively
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How can you help protect BC wildlife

• Prevention is the key

• If CWD is introduced, the sooner we find it, the better chance we’ll have to contain and manage it

• Early detection and accurate harvest location info will allow management over a smaller landscape
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This is us...Helen and Cait

The BC CWD Program

The CWD Program focus is:

Prevention, Outreach and Surveillance

What we need for success:

The Facts – the right info to the right people

The Numbers – the right number of heads to

Confidently say that “we don’t have CWD”

The Response – community awareness and support
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We have drop off locations for head submissions at the following:

**Peace Region**
- North Peace Rod & Gun Club, FSJ
- Peace Taxidermy, Hwy 29
- Russell's Custom Meat Cutting, Chetwynd
- Ministry of Environment, FSJ
  - (During office hours only)
- Ministry of Environment, Dawson Creek
  - (During office hours only)

**Kootenay Region**
- Cliff's Meat, Kimberley
- Backcountry Meats, Fernie
- Rick’s Fine Meats, Cranbrook
- Ministry of Environment, Cranbrook
  - (During office hours only)
- COS Ministry of Environment, Invermere
  - (During office hours only)
**CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE**

**WANTED!!**

**ALL DEER, ELK & MOOSE HUNTERS IN BC:**

We Need Your Help With

BC CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD) SURVEILLANCE

What is CWD?

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) affects deer, elk and moose (cervidae). It is not caused by viruses or bacteria, but is associated with abnormal protein (prions). It is related to Mad Cow Disease, and other prion diseases in animals and humans.

CWD is found in captive and free-ranging mule and whitetailed deer, elk and moose in many jurisdictions in North America, including Alberta and Saskatchewan. Intensive programs in Canada have controlled the disease in captive deer and elk, and are working to manage the disease in free-ranging deer.

CWD is always fatal. CWD is confirmed by measuring tissues from a dead animal’s head – the tensor, lymph nodes, and a small area at the base of the brain.

Is CWD in British Columbia?

BC is considered at low risk for CWD. No animals have tested positive in BC circulating since 2004, but ongoing testing is necessary to ensure the health of our wildlife. Heads of animals showing signs of CWD, as well as heads from road or hunter-killed animals are tested. Sampling is performed in the Peace and East Kootenay regions because they border Alberta. To date, all samples collected from BC are negative.

What are the Signs of CWD?

Early signs of CWD include changes in behaviour and weight loss. Signs in later stages of the disease include emaciation/severe wasting, drooling, excessive thirst, lethargy, poor coordination, and drooling, head and ears.

How is it Spread?

CWD occurs ONLY in cervidae, with no evidence of transmission to cattle. It is transmitted between animals through contact with or in saliva and/or feces. Contaminated material persists in the environment for a long time. Research has shown that animals can become infected by living in a prion-contaminated environment.

Can I Get It?

There is no evidence that CWD can infect humans. However, human health authorities advise against eating products from animals that are infected with CWD, or appear unusual.

For more detailed information on CWD, please see the Ministry of Environment pamphlet:

"CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE: A Wildlife Health Guide"

***HUNTERS***

**PLEASE SUBMIT DEER, ELK & MOOSE HEADS HERE**

BC CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD) SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

**GOOD SAMPLE**

- Priony dead or frozen immediately after death
- Not shot in head
- Good information about the kill location
- One year or older
- Tag filled out and attached to ear

**BAD SAMPLE**

- Rotten, green, and/or stinky
- Shot in head or head is severely damaged
- No information on where found or killed
- Less than one year old
- No tag attached to ear

***If possible, please remove antlers (due to limited freezer space)***

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR DROP-OFF:**

1. Please take a CWD bag, and fill out the information requested.
2. Your name, phone number, and hunter licence number (so we can notify you if sample is positive, or if more information is needed)
3. Species
4. Sex of animal
5. Approximate age of animal (yearling or adult)
6. Date of kill
7. Location of kill (Manhattan Unit: GPS or physical description of location, if possible)
8. How was the animal killed?
9. Did the animal look normal? If not, what was it doing?
10. Tear off the tagging (small portion with hole), and attach it to the animal’s ear using the plastic fasteners provided.
11. Please put the labeled head in a plastic bag, and put it in the freezer.
12. Then put the completed information card in the drop box.

Thank you for your support of this important program to ensure the health of our wildlife!
CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

You can have a role in reducing the risk and negative affects of CWD in BC

• If you hunt outside of BC, return with only the low risk materials (meat, hide, antlers, skull plate only)

• Share “the facts” with your friends, family and fellow hunters

• Submit your deer, elk or moose heads to the nearest drop-off freezer
For more info and updates on CWD

The BC Wildlife Health Program
www.gov.bc.ca/wildlifehealth

The CWD Alliance Website
www.cwd-info.org/

QUESTIONS???
Please contact us...

Cait Nelson
Wildlife Health Biologist
Cait.nelson@gov.bc.ca
(250) 953-5140

Helen Schwantje
Wildlife Veterinarian
Helen.schwantje@gov.bc.ca
(250) 953-4285

Photo: Jared Hobbs
Thank you

We want to acknowledge the participation and support from all of the stakeholder groups, individuals and our partners that contribute to our program and to keeping BC’s wildlife healthy.

*We couldn’t do it without you!!!*