Province taking steps to prevent deadly deer disease in B.C.

VICTORIA – The Province has implemented a mandatory sampling program requiring hunters to submit heads from deer harvested in specific wildlife management units in the Kootenay region.

From Sept. 1, 2019, to Nov. 30, 2019, hunters are required to submit the heads of mule deer and white-tailed deer harvested in specific wildlife management units (4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-6, 4-7) along the southern B.C. border in the Kootenay region. An interactive map and drop-off locations may be found online: www.gov.bc.ca/chronicwastingdisease.ca

This is because Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has discovered nine animals with chronic wasting disease 60 kilometres south of the B.C. border.

Montana FWP has confirmed nine white-tailed deer in Libby, Mont., have been infected with the disease. This is the first time chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been detected west of the Rocky Mountains. The discovery raises concerns about infected deer making their way into B.C., as Libby is within the range of deer movements between B.C. and Montana.

Chronic wasting disease is a progressive, fatal nervous system disease that affects members of the deer family (cervids), including mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose and elk. The disease is caused by an abnormal protein (prion), and can spread when a healthy animal comes into contact with an infected animal or an environment (soil, food or water) contaminated with the CWD prion.

The disease is not known to affect humans or animals other than cervid species. However, the World Health Organization strongly recommends against eating the meat from animals known or suspected to be infected.

The Province has been monitoring for the disease since 2002. The Peace and East Kootenay regions have been targeted as high-risk areas for disease entry due to the disease’s presence in Alberta and Montana. No cases of CWD have been found in B.C., however, more sampling is needed to confirm B.C.’s CWD-free status and inform any additional response.

The provincial Wildlife Health Program is also calling on hunters in other parts of the province, especially the Peace region, to bring deer, moose and elk heads to drop-off locations for CWD testing.

Anyone encountering an animal exhibiting the symptoms of chronic wasting disease (thin, drooling, poor co-ordination, stumbling) should report it to the provincial Wildlife Health Program at 250 751-3219 or the Report all Poachers and Polluters hotline at 1 877 952-7277.
Learn More:

For more information on chronic wasting disease in B.C., and for drop-off locations and instructions, visit:
www.gov.bc.ca/chronicwastingdisease.ca

For more information on chronic wasting disease in Montana, visit:
http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/diseasesAndResearch/diseases/chronicWastingDisease/management.html

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