



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
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Chronic Wasting Disease

Questions and Answers

The recent discovery of a mule deer that died of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Game Management Unit 34 has prompted the Department of Game and Fish to implement regulations affecting deer and elk hunters in this unit. The same regulations have been in effect for Unit 19 since 2002.

1. What is CWD?

Chronic wasting disease is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy disorder of deer and elk. In the final stages of the disease, an animal with CWD exhibits a drooping head and ears, lethargy, and chronic weight loss. CWD is always fatal.

2. How is CWD transmitted?

This is not fully understood. Evidence suggests that infected deer and elk may transmit the disease through animal-to-animal contact, or through infected urine or fecal waste contaminating their feed. Chronic wasting disease seems to occur in areas where deer or elk are crowded together or where they congregate to feed and drink.

3. Can people get CWD?

Chronic wasting disease is not known to affect people. According to wildlife experts and public health officials, there is NO evidence that chronic wasting disease has ever been transmitted to humans.

4. Can domestic livestock get CWD?

There is NO evidence that the disease can be transmitted to domestic livestock or to animals other than deer and elk.

5. What is the Department doing to prevent the spread of CWD?

With the discovery of the disease in Unit 34, the Department will increase its surveillance of deer and elk harvested in units 19, 29, 30 and 34. The Department has been examining deer and elk throughout New Mexico since 1999.

The Department has already established regulations to prevent the importation and exportation of diseased animals. When possibly infected animals have been found, they were destroyed and cremated.

6. Where else has CWD been found?

CWD has been found in Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, New York, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and New Mexico. CWD has also been found in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada.

It is illegal to remove a deer or elk carcass from a unit in another state that has confirmed CWD. Only boned-out meat, hides and decontaminated skullcaps may be removed. If hunting out of state, check with that state or province about their CWD regulations.

7. What are the CWD regulations that affect deer and elk hunters in Units 19 and 34?

Hunters who harvest a deer in Unit 19 or a deer or elk in Unit 34 are not allowed to remove any of part the animal except boned-out meat, hides and decontaminated skullcaps.

8. What are the CWD regulations that affect deer and elk hunters in other units?

There are no specific CWD regulations that affect hunters in other Game Management Units. However, all other hunting regulations still apply.

9. How will the Department check for CWD in hunter harvested deer and elk in Units 19 and 34?

The Department will have check stations located throughout the two affected units. Conservation Officers also may check hunters in their camps and on roadways in these units. Specific check station locations will be announced prior to Sept. 1. Please check with any Department office or our web site:

www.wildlife.state.nm.us to find the most convenient check station.

Hunters may decontaminate skullcaps at the check stations with the assistance of Department staff. The process takes about 30 minutes. If you wish, skullcaps can be disinfected in camp by soaking them for 30 minutes in a 50/50 solution of chlorine bleach and water.

Department of Game and Fish Offices

- Main Office, 1 Wildlife Way, Santa Fe, (505) 476-8000
- Northwest Area Office, 3841 Midway Pl. NE, Albuquerque, (505) 222-4700
- Northeast Area Office, 215 York Canyon Rd., Raton, (505) 445-2311
- Southwest Area Office, 2715 Northrise Dr., Las Cruces, (505) 532-2100
- Southeast Area Office, 1912 W. Second St., Roswell, (505) 624-6135

10. How is sampling performed?

It's really simple. You must bring the animal's head within 48 hours of harvest. One of our officers or biologists will collect information such as your name, address, license number and the location where the animal was taken. The sex and age of the deer or elk will be recorded.

The base of the skull will be exposed where it attaches to the spine and the brain stem and/or lymph nodes will be removed. The whole procedure takes only a few minutes.

11. Do hunters in units 19 and 34 have to stop at Department Check stations?

No, but the Department would like to sample lymph nodes and/or brain stems from every harvested deer and elk taken in Unit 19 and 34.

12. How can I enter a drawing to win an elk or oryx hunt?

Hunters from any unit in the state, except units 19 and 34, can stop at any Department office with a freshly harvested deer or elk's head. Hunters from units 19 and 34 must check their deer or elk head at a check station BEFORE leaving the unit if they wish to have it tested and enter the drawing. The animal must have been taken within 48 hours, must not be frozen or begun to decay. A head-shot will not be acceptable for testing. An officer will remove the proper tissue to test for CWD. It only takes a few minutes.

Anyone doing so will be entered into a drawing and qualified to win a free elk or oryx hunting authorization for the 2006-2007 hunting season.

13. What if the test shows that my deer or elk tested positive for CWD?

All hunters stopping at a check station will be issued a receipt.

If their deer or elk TESTS POSITIVE, they WILL be notified.

If their animal TESTS NEGATIVE, hunters WILL NOT be contacted.

Again, there is NO evidence that chronic wasting disease has ever been transmitted to humans.

14. Will testing destroy my trophy?

Absolutely not. Sampling will not affect the head for mounting. If you do intend to mount it, the head should be capped prior to you bringing it in. Removing the tissue sample will not prevent you from mounting the antlers.

15. Where can I learn more about CWD?

Visit the Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance web site at: **www.cwd-info.org/**.

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