

BE INFORMED AND GET INVOLVED IN
*Protecting Missouri's
White-tailed Deer*

Infectious diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) threaten Missouri deer, 520,000 Missouri deer hunters, millions of wildlife watchers, thousands of landowners, 12,000 Missouri jobs, and hundreds of businesses and communities that depend on the \$1 billion in economic activity related to deer hunting and watching.



The Missouri Department of Conservation continues to work with hunters, landowners, businesses, other agencies, and partner organizations to identify and limit the spread of CWD in Missouri.

All deer hunters, landowners, businesses, and conservation organizations in Missouri must continue to do their parts in limiting the spread of CWD and other infectious diseases, including captive deer breeders and big-game hunting preserves.

Be informed about and get involved in this serious issue.



Chronic Wasting Disease Kills Deer

CWD is a disease that infects deer and other members of the deer family, called *cervids*. CWD is spread both directly from deer to deer and indirectly to deer from infected soil and other surfaces. The disease currently has no vaccine or cure, and is believed to be 100% fatal. There is no scientific evidence that white-tailed deer have a genetic immunity to CWD that could be passed on to future generations. Deer and other cervids can have CWD for several years without showing any symptoms. Once symptoms are visible, infected animals typically die within one or two months.

CWD has been found in 23 states, including Missouri, and several Canadian provinces. Once well established in an area, CWD appears impossible to eradicate. States with CWD must focus on limiting the spread of the disease and preventing its introduction to new areas.

Don't Confuse CWD with Hemorrhagic Disease (HD)

A disease often mistaken for CWD by the public is Hemorrhagic Disease. This includes both the bluetongue virus and epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus. During the summer and fall of 2012, severe drought conditions contributed to a significant increase in cases of HD throughout Missouri. MDC received significantly fewer reports of deer mortalities in 2013 than in 2012. The naturally occurring viruses are spread by a small, biting midge fly during the

summer and fall. Disease outbreaks end when cold weather kills the host flies. Deer typically show symptoms within days of being infected, but not all infected deer die from HD. There is no way to manage or prevent HD. Historically, outbreaks occur during drought years. Deer herds have always recovered from the outbreaks.

CWD is in Missouri

Missouri's first cases of CWD were detected in 2010 and 2011 in captive deer at private hunting preserves in Linn and Macon counties. A total of 11 cases of CWD have been confirmed in captive deer at the facilities. CWD has since been found in 10 free-ranging deer within two miles of the captive facility in Macon County. CWD in Missouri has not been detected outside of a small area that borders northeastern Linn and northwestern Macon counties.

CWD is a Serious Problem for All Missourians

Missouri offers some of the best deer hunting in the country, and deer hunting is an important part of many Missourians' lives and family traditions. Infectious diseases such as CWD hurt hunting and wildlife watching for Missouri's more than 520,000 deer hunters and more than two million wildlife watchers.





Deer hunting is an important economic driver in Missouri and has a \$1 billion annual impact on state and local economies. Lower deer numbers from infectious diseases such as CWD could hurt 12,000 Missouri jobs and many businesses that rely on deer hunting as a significant source of revenue, such as meat processors, taxidermists, hotels, restaurants, sporting goods stores, and others.

CWD also threatens the tens of thousands of private landowners who manage their land for deer and deer hunting, and who rely on deer and deer hunting to maintain property values.

MDC is Leading Detection and Containment Efforts

Missourians care about conservation and have given the Missouri Department of Conservation constitutional responsibility to protect and manage all of the state's wildlife, including white-tailed deer. Both captive and free-ranging white-tailed deer in Missouri are wildlife.

MDC began testing free-ranging white-tailed deer for CWD throughout the state in 2001 when the disease began emerging as a serious issue in the Midwest. MDC has followed well established scientific sampling processes and tested more than 40,000 free-ranging white-tailed deer for CWD to date. As a result of that testing, MDC determined that it is highly unlikely

CWD was in Missouri before its recent discovery in north-central Missouri.

Since CWD was first found in Missouri in 2010, the Department has intensified efforts to work with hunters, landowners, taxidermists, and meat processors to test free-ranging deer around the state for CWD, especially in the area of north-central Missouri where CWD has been found.

MDC has also been working with area landowners and hunters to limit the spread of CWD. Efforts include reducing deer numbers in the area where CWD has been found, and discouraging movement of harvested deer carcasses from the area where CWD has been found.

MDC is working with hunters to limit the threat of CWD from other states by restricting transportation of harvested deer carcasses into Missouri.

MDC has also been working with the public to limit the spread of CWD to other deer by restricting feeding of deer in the area where CWD has been found, and by eliminating the antler-point restriction in six counties in north-central Missouri around where CWD has been found.

AREAS OF CONCERN AND POTENTIAL REGULATIONS

Captive Cervids

The Department of Conservation, consistent with its constitutional mandate, is responsible for the management of captive wildlife – ranging from quail to black bears to venomous snakes to white-tailed deer. As of January 2014, Missouri has 39 permitted big-game hunting preserves and 221 permitted wildlife breeders with white-tailed deer. Since 2003 the number of wildlife breeders with white-tailed deer has remained constant. Records indicate that over 200 captive wildlife breeders hold less than 50 deer. Only 8 permittees hold more than 100 deer.

Regulating and permitting of captive white-tailed deer by the Conservation Department is focused to minimize impacts to Missouri's free-ranging wildlife resources, ensure appropriate confinement standards/facilities, address wildlife disease potential, ensure the integrity of the captive cervid industry, and regulate hunting of captive wildlife.

Areas of Concern

1. Captive cervid movement: risk of disease transmission. CWD-monitored captive herds of white-tailed deer in Iowa and Pennsylvania, and a captive red deer herd in Minnesota, have been found to be CWD-positive despite certification and monitoring efforts. Disease transmission between captive herds has been documented in Saskatchewan, Iowa, New York, and Minnesota. Many states that currently allow captive deer herds have taken steps to close their borders to interstate movement of deer. To help minimize risk to Missouri's deer, the Department is considering closing Missouri to interstate movement of captive deer. This will help minimize potential disease risks from moving infected captive deer. A recent example is Florida and New York closing their borders. Captive deer breeders and shooting preserves could still obtain deer from captive herds currently in our state.

2. Fencing standards: inadequate separation of captive and free-ranging deer and direct and indirect live animal interaction. Past experiences have shown existing fence standards need to be enhanced. Deer breeders and shooting preserves have reported more than 150 escapes over the last 3 years. Deer to deer contact is possible with existing fencing standards.

3. Captive cervid testing and herd certification: Deer and other cervid breeders participating in the voluntary CWD Herd Certification Program are only required to test animals over 12 months of age that die within the facility. Big-game shooting preserves are not required to test deer for CWD. Not all deer breeders participate in the voluntary program. Currently, less than 70 percent of white-tailed deer breeders participate in the program. Rapid detection is the key to maximizing our ability to effectively manage the spread of CWD and other diseases.

A need exists for real-time inventory information on all captive deer herds. Information should be up-to-date and clearly document where a specific animal came from and when it was removed (shot or sold) from the herd. Without these details, the ability to determine where animals came from is not possible when disease outbreaks occur. This information served Iowa and Wisconsin very well when they discovered CWD-positive herds in their states.

Potential Regulations

- **Close MO borders to importation**
- **New fencing standards**
- **Mandatory enrollment of all captive herds in the CWD monitoring program**
- **Test all captive deer that die from six months of age and older**

Be Informed and Get Involved

The Department would like your input. Share your comments online at mdc.mo.gov/node/16478

