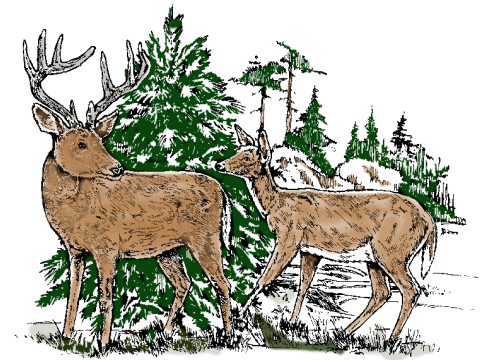


What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a neurological (brain and nervous system) disease found in deer, elk, moose and other members of the deer family. It is similar to “mad cow” disease in cattle and scrapie in sheep. The disease belongs to a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) or prion diseases. In infected deer it leads to emaciation, abnormal behaviors and other neurological abnormalities and is 100 percent fatal to the animal.



What causes CWD?

The infection is believed to be caused by abnormal proteins called prions, which are thought to lead to brain and neurological damage and the development of prion diseases. Prions concentrate in certain tissues, such as brain, spinal cord, lymph nodes and spleen and are present in lower concentrations in other tissue such as muscle.

How is CWD spread?

CWD is thought to spread from animal to animal through contact with contaminated body fluids and tissue, or indirectly through exposure to CWD in the environment, such as in drinking water or food.

Is CWD a risk to humans?

The disease is not known to cause infection humans, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has never reported a case of CWD in people. However, recent animal studies suggest that CWD poses a risk to some types of monkeys that eat meat from CWD infected animals, or come in contact with the brain or other organs of infected deer. These studies raise concerns that there may also be a risk to people.

Is deer meat safe to eat?

The CDC now recommends that hunters harvesting deer from areas with reported CWD should strongly consider having those animals tested before eating their meat. However, CWD cannot be positively detected in muscle tissue such as processed meat.

To be as safe as possible and to prevent any potential human exposure to CWD, the following precautions are recommended:

- Out of an abundance of caution, the Mississippi State Department of Health recommends that hunters consider not eating venison from deer harvested within the CWD Management Zone as defined by the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.
- Do not shoot, handle or eat meat from a deer that appears sick.
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when field dressing your deer.
- Bone out the meat from your animal. Don't saw through bone, and avoid cutting through the brain or spinal cord (backbone).
- Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing is completed.
- Avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out a carcass will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes.)
- Avoid consuming the meat from any animal that tests positive for the disease.
- If you have your deer commercially processed, request that your animal is processed individually, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your animal.

