

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE ALLIANCE

Annual Report – 2002

Introduction

In January 2002, in response to their growing concerns regarding chronic wasting disease (CWD), the Boone and Crockett Club, Mule Deer Foundation and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation initiated a collaborative project called the **Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance**. These organizations were deeply concerned about the impact CWD was having, and may continue to have, on North America's wild deer and elk populations. They were also concerned about the impact this disease may have upon millions of hunters' desire and opportunity to hunt deer and elk each fall, and upon their confidence to continue to put healthful wild venison on their families' tables.

Throughout the year other nationally respected organizations joined the effort. The Alliance presently consists of the original three partners plus the Pope and Young Club, Quality Deer Management Association, Wildlife Management Institute, National Shooting Sports Foundation and Cabela's. These partners collectively committed almost \$60,000 to the project during 2002.

The mission of the CWD Alliance is to *promote responsible and accurate communications regarding CWD, and to support strategies that effectively control CWD to minimize its impact on wild, free-ranging deer and elk populations.*

Alliance Summary

Alliance partners agreed to pool resources, share information and cooperate on projects and activities to positively impact the CWD issue. The Alliance encourages the development of solutions that do not necessitate the depopulation of wild cervid populations.

The Alliance recognizes that appropriate public information and education are vital to the resolution of the CWD dilemma. In an effort to promote responsible, timely and accurate communications the Alliance has:

- Developed a comprehensive CWD website;
- Sponsored the National CWD Symposium, August 6 & 7, 2002 in Denver, CO;
- Cooperated on the publication of responsible and accurate CWD articles in their respective organization's member magazines;
- Served as a resource for other media sources seeking information about CWD;
- Provided expert testimony to select decision makers such as state wildlife commissions, state legislatures, and the United States Congress; and
- Participated on several CWD work groups and committees.

Other potential Alliance activities include:

- Sponsorship or co-sponsorship of other CWD educational projects such as symposia, publications, and videos;
- Consideration of grant requests for specific CWD research and management projects;
- Working with state and federal agencies to develop policy recommendations for the management and eradication of CWD;
- Encourage research into the development of an accurate and practical live animal diagnostic test, and a timely and accurate field test for checking hunter-harvested deer and elk; and
- Supporting legislative actions that provide positive measures for the control and eradication of CWD.

2002 Project Activity Detail

Dr. Gary J. Wolfe is serving as the Alliance's project leader, and represented the Alliance on many fronts during 2002.

Website

The CWD website (www.cwd-info.org) is the Alliance's flagship project. It was launched in July 2002, and by all accounts has been well received by wildlife professionals, hunters and the media. The operational philosophy has been that the site should be a clearinghouse for responsible, accurate and timely information about CWD.

A total of 82,052 website visits were recorded between July and December 2002. Average daily visits ranged from a low of 135 in July, to a peak of 880 in November (Appendix A). Pyron Technologies, the Missoula-based website company that provides the technical support had this to say about the site visitation:

"CWD-info was receiving 880 visits a day. The only way for a new site to get that kind of traffic is to advertise everywhere. Most content-rich nonprofit sites get 100 to 400 visits a day. This means the Alliance is doing a good job of delivering content. The other important thing to note is that whether you type in the abbreviation (CWD) or its full name, it gets top search engine placement."

The *News and Updates* page is updated several times weekly, and additional information is constantly being added to make the site more thorough and useful. Tia Kropf, a University of Montana senior wildlife student, is assisting with the website. She is doing an excellent job keeping the *News and Updates* section current.

Following are a few comments from website users:

"I recently went through the CWD Alliance website. What a wealth of information and well formatted. Sportsmen need to know the truth without the

sensationalizing that the media does on this issue. I have a tremendous amount of respect for you and your work.”

*Mike Cox
Big Game Staff Biologist
Nevada Division of Wildlife*

“The CWD Alliance Web site is an excellent resource. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has been proactive in preventing CWD in our state and our Wildlife Management division has referred many people to your site.”

*Lee Ratcliffe
Webmaster
NC Wildlife Resources Commission*

The Alliance site looks good and should be very helpful to all those who want trustworthy information. Good luck with the site. By the way, we have linked the Alberta Fish and Wildlife disease pages to the Alliance site.

*M.J. Pybus, Ph.D.
Wildlife Disease Specialist
Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division*

“Keep up the good work on the site. You've captured all the recent information in a handy place for the layman.”

*Tim Feldner
Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks*

“The site looks great! There sure are a lot of useful links and information.”

*Julie Rose
Laboratory Technician
Rose Lake Wildlife Disease Laboratory
Michigan Department of Natural Resources*

CWD Symposia

The Alliance co-sponsored the National CWD Symposium held August 6-7 in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Wolfe served on the symposium planning committee and presented a paper during the conference program. The Alliance also underwrote the preparation of a symposium synopsis, written by Dr. Wayne van Zwoell, which is available on the website.

Wolfe also spoke at a CWD conference hosted by the Idaho Wildlife Federation in May and one hosted by the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association in September.

Congressional Testimony

Dr. Wolfe traveled to Washington, DC to participate in the May 16th congressional oversight hearing on CWD. He was one of 10 witnesses invited to testify before the House Resources' Forest and Forest Health Subcommittee. His testimony is posted on the CWD Alliance website under the *Policy and Legislative* tab.

CWD Working Groups and Committees

Wolfe was appointed to the Multi-State CWD Working Group and to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Fish and Wildlife Health Committee. He represented the Alliance at:

three meetings of the Multi-State CWD Working Group

- December 17, 2002 Cheyenne, WY
- March 5, 2002 Sidney, NE
- August 8, 2002 Denver, CO

two meetings of IAFWA's Fish and Wildlife Health Committee

- April 5, 2002 Dallas, TX
- Sept. 19, 2002 Big Sky, MT

and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Wildlife Health Committee and the Mule Deer Working Group meetings in Albuquerque, NM July 13, 2002.

Media Outreach

Wolfe provided 17 media interviews on behalf of the CWD Alliance. These included television and radio programs, newspapers and magazine articles. Those media interactions are summarized below:

Spring, 2002 Telephone interview for Edmonton, AB outdoors radio show.

May 2, 2002 Interview with Wayne van Zwoll for a CWD article for "Guns and Gear" magazine.

Aug. 26, 2002 Interview with Jerry Vaillancourt for a special "ESPN Outdoors" program on CWD.

- Sept. 6, 2002 Telephone interview with Jodi Kohler (AP-Denver) for a feature article on CWD and hunters.
- Sept. 9, 2002 Interview with James Schlinder for a special CWD issue of “Deer and Deer Hunting” magazine.
- Sept. 23, 2002 Interview with Rob Drieslein, Minnesota Outdoor News.
- Sept. 23, 2002 Interview with Rick Romell, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.
- Sept. 25, 2002 Interview with Paul Lepisto for Dakota Backroads, a radio program syndicated on 39 stations in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.
- Oct. 3, 2002 Interview with Kurt Bresswein, The Express-Times (newspaper) in Easton, PA.
- Oct. 11, 2002 Live radio interview with Rick Windham, host of “The Outdoor Connection” on KODY in North Platte, NE. His show has about 35,000 listeners – mostly hunters.
- Oct. 11, 2002 Interview with Bob Berwin, a reporter for High Country News, Denver, CO.
- Oct. 23, 2002 Guest interview on “The BIG WILD”, a radio show broadcast on ESPN Radio in Madison, WI.
- Oct. 28, 2002 Interview with Susan Milius, a writer for “Science News”. Science News is a weekly nonprofit publication based in Washington, DC with a distribution of 150,000 – 200,000.
- Nov. 12, 2002 Interview with Matt Crawford, Outdoor Editor at the Burlington Free Press, a newspaper in Burlington, VT.
- Nov. 19, 2002 Interview with Cara Hetland, Minnesota Public Radio, Sioux Falls, SD.
- Nov. 19, 2002 Interview with Jessica Bock, Wausau Daily Herald, Wausau, WI.
- Nov. 21, 2002 Interview with Dr. Tina Hesman, science reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis, MO.

Future Needs and Opportunities

With approximately 160,000 hunter-harvested deer and elk being tested from the 2002 hunting season, the known distribution of CWD will likely continue to expand. Because potential human health risks are still not quantified and impacts on wildlife population

dynamics are uncertain, CWD will likely remain a priority wildlife management issue for the next several years.

There is certainly an important continuing role for the CWD Alliance. Communication of timely and accurate information to the public and media will continue to be a priority.

- There are numerous opportunities to expand the scope and depth of information provided on the website. A number of upgrades and additions are already being developed.
- The National CWD Plan Implementation Team has indicated it will be looking to the CWD Alliance to assist with its public information and outreach efforts.
- There will continue to be many opportunities to sponsor and/or present at CWD conferences.
 - Wolfe represented the Alliance and spoke at a CWD Symposium in Edmonton, Alberta on January 11, 2003;
 - The Alliance and the National Shooting Sports Foundation will co-sponsor a CWD program for the national outdoor media at the SHOT Show in February;
 - Wolfe has been invited to speak at a Northwest Tribal CWD conference in late February; and
 - The Alliance and the Outdoor Writers Association of America will co-sponsor a special CWD session at their annual meeting in June.
- Undoubtedly, there will continue to be numerous opportunities to provide media interviews and direct the media to reasonable and accurate information sources.
- There will be continuing opportunities to participate in various CWD task forces and committees, and to provide input into agency and public policy development.

Membership in the Alliance is expected to expand. Several other sportsmen's and conservation organizations have expressed an interest in joining the CWD Alliance, and three grant requests have been submitted requesting support for the Alliance's 2003 project activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE CWD ALLIANCE, CONTACT:

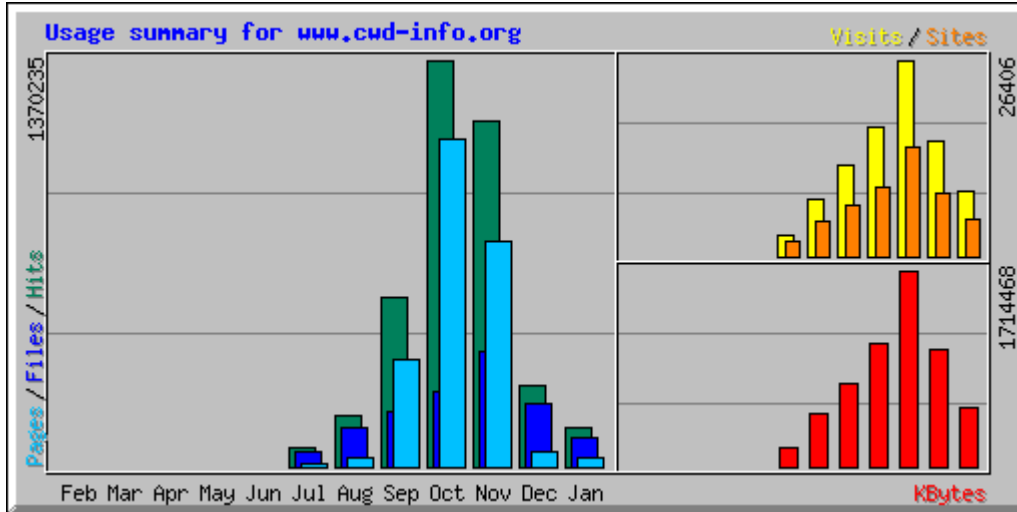
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APPENDIX A Website Statistics

Usage Statistics for www.cwd-info.org

Summary Period: Last 12 Months

Generated 21-Jan-2003 12:30 CST



Summary by Month										
Month	Daily Avg				Monthly Totals					
	Hits	Files	Pages	Visits	Sites	KBytes	Visits	Pages	Files	Hits
Jan 2003	6376	4799	1293	411	5102	524708	8631	27167	100779	133905
Dec 2002	8919	6760	1666	498	8461	1025440	15443	51675	209587	276500
Nov 2002	38732	12943	25342	880	14804	1714468	26406	760285	388291	1161966
Oct 2002	44201	8087	35528	558	9326	1075470	17327	1101394	250717	1370235
Sep 2002	18936	6259	12074	412	7003	724708	12385	362245	187796	568091
Aug 2002	5452	4180	970	246	4782	469953	7651	30099	129583	169030
Jul 2002	3065	2252	487	135	2056	164906	2840	10240	47295	64370
Totals						5699653	90683	2343105	1314048	3744097