

No New CWD States in 2003

By QDMA Staff

Chronic wasting disease (CWD), the fatal and incurable wasting disease of deer and elk, was not discovered from samples taken in 2003 in any states where it was previously not known to exist — although some samples collected in 2003 remain to be tested. However, last year the disease was confirmed in new areas within Utah and Wyoming in the West, and in Wisconsin and Illinois in the East.

“Going into 2002, many of us wildlife biologists felt like CWD was probably much more widespread than we knew it to be because we hadn’t been looking for it,” said Dr. Gary Wolfe, the project leader of the CWD Alliance, a collaborative project that includes the QDMA and 11 other organizations. “Now, over 250,000 samples of deer and elk have been tested in North America, way more samples than had ever been checked for CWD before 2002. The good news is that we have now looked, and we only found it in a couple of new areas, and in 2003 no new states at all.”

Around the nation, deer-management agencies are monitoring and working to control or prevent CWD — 26 states have banned importation of all live cervids (deer and elk); 47 states are testing samples from wild deer or elk for CWD; 14 states have enacted carcass-transportation laws to regulate the importation of hunter-harvested deer and elk remains, and five more are discussing similar bans. With carcass-transportation laws becoming more common, the CWD Alliance will soon release an interactive, educational CD that will teach hunters how to field dress and de-bone the meat from deer or elk in compliance with the new regulations.

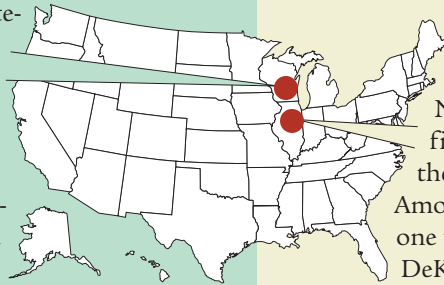
In some states where CWD is endemic, control measures are aimed at reducing deer density in order to reduce the incidence of infection, said Dr. Wolfe. More time is needed, he added, to determine whether or not that approach is working.

In other good news, ongoing and intensive research has yet to turn up any evidence that CWD is transmissible to cattle by natural means, and the World Health Organization continues to state that there is no evidence that CWD is transmissible to humans, although precautions in handling and consuming venison are encouraged. For more information about CWD, log on to www.cwd-info.org.



Wisconsin: Another county has been added to the list of those in Wisconsin where CWD-positive white-tails have been found. A deer killed by a hunter on November 22, 2003 in Kenosha County tested positive, according to a press release issued January 8 by Wisconsin DNR. Kenosha County is in southeastern Wisconsin near the Illinois border and is outside both the deer-eradication zone surrounding Mt. Horeb and the larger deer-reduction zone around the eradication zone. Kenosha joins Rock and Walworth as counties located near the Illinois border where CWD-positive deer have been found in recent samples.

For more information log on to www.dnr.state.wi.us.



Illinois: On January 28, Illinois DNR announced that 24 hunter-killed deer tested positive for CWD in northern Illinois in 2003, bringing the total to 39 cases confirmed since November 2002, when the first positive whitetail in the state was discovered. Among the nine new cases, one was in a new county, DeKalb. Before the 2003 hunting season, it appeared that CWD cases were confined to Boone, Winnebago, and McHenry counties.

Testing is still incomplete on more than 4,000 samples from hunter-harvested whitetails taken in 2003. Preliminary figures indicate that Illinois deer hunters killed a record total of nearly 104,000 deer during the seven-day firearms season in late November and early December. For more information visit <http://dnr.state.il.us/cwd/index.htm>.

Deer Truckers Caught Entering Michigan With Live Deer and Elk

On November 3, officers with the Milan, Michigan Police Department and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) intercepted a truck and trailer hauling five white-tailed deer and one elk fawn when the truck broke down in Milan. Due to CWD concerns, the state of Michigan has banned the importation of all live deer and elk.

The two Michigan residents, a man and his wife, said they purchased the animals at a legal auction in Ohio and were returning to their home in Howard City, Mich., according to the police report. After DNR officers consulted with Al Rodriguez, a compliance officer with the Michigan Department of Agriculture, the couple was offered a choice of returning the animals live to Ohio or proceeding on to their home in Michigan, where the animals would be quarantined until they could be euthanized and tested for CWD. They chose to return the animals to Ohio.

Rodriguez went to the couple’s residence the next day to conduct a records check of permitted fallow deer. There investigators said they discovered an elk that had been illegally imported one month earlier from Indiana. The elk was later put down and tested negative for both CWD and bovine tuberculosis. The property is still under quarantine.

According to Rodriguez, intentional importation of live cervids is a felony.

“We didn’t find any evidence of intentional violation,” said Rodriguez. “More or less it was not knowing about the ban.”

Instead of felony criminal charges, the state will hold a hearing to look into misdemeanor administrative charges, and the Michigan couple potentially faces a minimum of \$300 and a maximum of \$1,000 for each of the seven charges of illegal importation (including the elk brought in from Indiana).

According to Rodriguez, the Ohio auction house where the deer and elk were purchased stated that it is the responsibility of the purchaser to know the laws on importation in their home state. However, Rodriguez said his department is hoping to work with legal auction houses to educate clients on importation bans.