What is being done about CWD in Virginia?

VDGIF has developed a CWD Response Plan that guides response actions when CWD is found in or near Virginia, as well as an annually-updated CWD Surveillance Plan that guides how we will continue to look for the disease. VDGIF monitors CWD status in other states as well as new information and developments as they emerge, continues to closely regulate captive deer in Virginia, and regularly provides accurate and timely information about CWD to deer hunters and the general public. Due to the detection of CWD in Frederick County in 2005, VDGIF has implemented a number of measures to protect Virginia’s deer herd, continues to look for the disease, and has maintained robust surveillance for the disease.

The following carcass parts are allowed:

- Finished taxidermy products.
- Upper canine teeth, also known as “buglers,” “whistlers,” or “tines.”
- Finished taxidermy products.

A legible label shall be affixed to packages or containers holding the allowed carcass parts with the following information: the species of animal, the state or province where the animal originated, and the name and address of the person who killed or owned the animal. A summary of state-by-state carcass transportation regulations is provided on the CWD Alliance website (www.cwd-info.org). Since these regulations are continually evolving, it is recommended that, before hunting, you check the CWD regulations in your home state, the state in which you will be hunting, and states in which you will travel through en route home from your hunting area.

What about taking deer carcasses out of Virginia?

Now that Virginia is considered a CWD positive state, deer hunters must follow carcass importation regulations in other states when they transport a deer carcass out of Virginia (see www.cwd-info.org/index.php/fuseaction/policy_regulationsMap). Restrictions for nearby state areas follow:

- Kentucky and North Carolina: Carcasses from anywhere in Virginia must be boned-out or quartered so the brain and spinal cord is removed.
- Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia: Whole deer carcasses are allowed except those originating from Virginia’s CWD Containment Area. Deer carcasses must be boned-out or quartered so the brain and spinal cord is removed.
- Tennessee: Whole deer carcasses are allowed except those originating from Frederick County and Shenandoah County, where carcasses must be boned-out or quartered so the brain and spinal cord is removed.
- Whole deer carcasses or deer parts cannot be transported out of the CWD Containment Area.

What are the CWD Containment Areas?

There are currently three CWD Containment Areas located in Frederick County and the City of Winchester, Virginia. The CWD Containment Areas are: the CWD Containment Area located in Frederick County and the City of Winchester, where carcasses must be boned-out or quartered so the brain and spinal cord is removed; the CWD Containment Area, except:

- Deer parts currently allowed under the carcass importation ban (i.e., quarters or other meat with no spinal material, wrapped boned-out meat; see complete list above)
- Whole deer carcasses or parts being transported directly to commercial meat processors, taxidermists, or lined landfills within Frederick or Shenandoah counties

Three hunting season changes will apply to private lands in Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties and the City of Winchester including:

- The daily gun season shall be two to five days per year.
- Earn-A-Buck is in effect, meaning at least one antlerless deer must be taken on private lands before the second antlered deer of the license year may be taken on private lands.
- Both the early and late muzzleloading seasons on private lands in Shenandoah County will be full season either sex.
- No changes have been made for public lands in any of these counties

When can deer be harvested in the CWD Containment Area?

All deer killed by hunters within the CWD Containment Area on specified dates must be brought to a designated sampling station for CWD testing.

- The first 3 Saturdays of general firearms season (e.g., November 19, 26, and December 3, 2011)
- Hunters can still check their deer via telephone or Internet but must bring the deer to a designated CWD sampling station on these specified dates

For designated sampling stations and other updates, please check the VDGIF CWD website (www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/diseases/cwd) and look for press releases before hunting season.
Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

CWD is a progressive neurological (brain and nervous system) disease found in North American deer, elk, and moose. CWD belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). CWD causes a characteristic spongiform degeneration in the brains of infected animals, resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions, and ultimately death.

What has CWD been found in?

As of June 1, 2011, CWD has been found in Alberta, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Please see the map below.

Does CWD exist in Virginia?

Yes. Two positive cases of CWD have been confirmed in Virginia. The first case of CWD was detected in a female deer killed by a hunter in November 2009 on private land in Frederick County. The second confirmed case came during the 2010 hunting season, from a hunter in November 2009 on private land in Frederick County. Both cases were found within a few miles of where CWD has been confirmed in South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

CWD is a progressive neurological disease that can infect multiple species of deer, elk, and moose. It is characterized by a spongiform degeneration in the brain and nervous system, resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions, and ultimately death.

What causes CWD?

The disease agent appears to be abnormally shaped proteins, called prions, in nervous system and lymph tissues. The prion “infects” the host animal by changing a normal protein into the abnormal form. Unlike bacteria or viruses, prions do not cause an immune response in the infected animal. Prions are resistant to enzymes and chemicals that normally break down proteins.

How is CWD spread?

It is believed that CWD prions are spread both directly (animal-to-animal contact) and indirectly (soil or other surface to animal). Prions are likely shed through saliva, feces, and urine of infected deer. Prions can remain infectious in the soil for several years.

Areas adjacent to CWD-positive wildlife areas with concentrations of captive deer and elk, and areas that have received deer and elk from infected areas may be at higher risk for introduction of the disease. Since a possible mode of CWD transmission is via consumption of carcasses originating from infected carcasses, a number of states and provinces (including Virginia) have adopted regulations for the transport and disposal of carcasses originating from any area designated by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) as a carcass-restriction zone in or adjacent to a state or Canadian province that is nearest to you. Arrangements will be made to investigate the rest of the animals, and (c) testing of all deer that die in captivity (a DGIF permit is required to possess any member of the deer family in Virginia, and must be held by the hunter). Sampling in 2002 and 2007, active sampling has been confined to an area in Frederick and Shenandoah Counties nearest the CWD cases in West Virginia.

What causes CWD?

The disease agent appears to be abnormally shaped proteins, called prions, in nervous system and lymph tissues. The prion “infects” the host animal by changing a normal protein into the abnormal form. Unlike bacteria or viruses, prions do not cause an immune response in the infected animal. Prions are resistant to enzymes and chemicals that normally break down proteins.

How is CWD spread?

It is believed that CWD prions are spread both directly (animal-to-animal contact) and indirectly (soil or other surface to animal). Prions are likely shed through saliva, feces, and urine of infected deer. Prions can remain infectious in the soil for several years.

Areas adjacent to CWD-positive wildlife areas with concentrations of captive deer and elk, and areas that have received deer and elk from infected areas may be at higher risk for introduction of the disease. Since a possible mode of CWD transmission is via consumption of carcasses originating from infected carcasses, a number of states and provinces (including Virginia) have adopted regulations for the transport and disposal of carcasses originating from any area designated by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) as a carcass-restriction zone in or adjacent to a state or Canadian province that is nearest to you. Arrangements will be made to investigate the rest of the animals, and (c) testing of all deer that die in captivity (a DGIF permit is required to possess any member of the deer family in Virginia, and must be held by the hunter). Sampling in 2002 and 2007, active sampling has been confined to an area in Frederick and Shenandoah Counties nearest the CWD cases in West Virginia.

What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)?

CWD is a progressive neurological (brain and nervous system) disease found in North American deer, elk, and moose. CWD belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). CWD causes a characteristic spongiform degeneration in the brains of infected animals, resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions, and ultimately death.

In early stages of infection, animals do not show any symptoms. In later stages of infection, animals may show abnormalities such as staggering, carrying the head and neck in an exaggerated wide posture. Sick animals may have poor hair coat and appear emaciated, or starving, thus the name “wasting disease.” Clinical symptoms are typically not seen in deer less than 16 months of age. Some CWD symptoms may also be characteristic of diseases or conditions other than CWD (e.g., bacterial brain abscesses, hemorrhagic disease, or normal spring and fall hair shedding).

How is CWD diagnosed?

The only way to make a definitive diagnosis is to examine the brain and/or anterior lymph nodes (near the head) in a laboratory. There is no practical live-animal test for free-ranging cervids, and there is no vaccine or treatment for CWD.

What should I do if I see a deer that shows CWD symptoms?

Do not attempt to contact, disturb, kill, or remove the animal. You should accurately document the location of the animal and immediately contact the VDGIF at 1-804-367-1258 or the office listed below that is nearest to you. Arrangements will be made to investigate the rest of the animals, and (c) testing of all deer that die in captivity (a DGIF permit is required to possess any member of the deer family in Virginia, and must be held by the hunter). Sampling in 2002 and 2007, active sampling has been confined to an area in Frederick and Shenandoah Counties nearest the CWD cases in West Virginia.

What should I do if I find out a deer or elk I killed had CWD?

Many states have CWD testing programs. If you are notified that a deer or elk you killed in another state tested positive for CWD, and you have brought any part of the carcass back to Virginia, you are required to contact VDGIF within 72 hours. VDGIF may take possession of any imported carcasses or carcass parts from a CWD-positive animal.

What about importing deer carcasses into Virginia from other states?

Virginia’s carcass transportation regulation prohibits the importation of whole deer, elk, or moose carcasses or specified parts of carcasses originating from any area designated by the Department as a carcass-nutrition zone in or adjacent to a state or Canadian carcass-nutrition zone.