

Appendix V.

Example of General Information about CWD and CSKT Wildlife's surveillance FAQs

Q. What is Chronic Wasting Disease and how do deer, elk, and moose catch it?

A. Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is one type of a class of diseases called Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) that infects members of the deer family, including deer, elk, moose, and caribou. TSEs are caused by infectious, miss-folded prion proteins (not a virus, bacteria, or fungus) which cause normal prion proteins throughout a healthy animal's body to miss-fold, resulting in organ damage and eventual death. These prions are found throughout bodily tissues and secretions and are shed into the environment before and after death. When other animals come in contact with the prions, either from infected animals or from contaminated environments, they can be infected. The disease is slow acting, degenerative, and always fatal. The name comes from the appearance of symptomatic animals, which get very skinny and sick-looking before they die.

Q. Where does CWD come from?

A. The origin of CWD is unknown. It was discovered in 1967 in mule deer at a research facility in Colorado. Shortly thereafter it was also found in captive mule deer and elk in Ontario, Colorado and Wyoming. By the 1990s, it was discovered in wild white-tailed and mule deer, elk and moose in Colorado and Wyoming and among captive animals in Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Montana and Oklahoma. By the early 2000s, CWD was found in the wild in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Illinois and Wisconsin. CWD has continued to spread. As of 2018, it has been found in captive or free-ranging herds in 26 states, three Canadian provinces, Norway, Finland and South Korea. CWD was found among wild deer in Montana in 2017.

Q. Is CWD found on the Flathead Indian Reservation?

A. Yes! In 2025, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was detected in the Hog Heaven Management Unit from a harvested mule deer. The threat of the disease is a pressing issue for the preservation of tribal food sovereignty. As such, the Tribal Wildlife Management Program has adopted and implemented a Surveillance and Emergency Response Plan for CWD on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Because of this positive detection, the CSKT NRD Division of Fish, Wildlife, Recreation, and Conservation has designated the Hog Heaven and Irvine wildlife management units as a CWD management area, and all animals harvested in these areas are required to be tested for CWD as directed by Tribal Council.

Q. What is a CWD Management Zone?

A. A CWD Management Zone is one or more Wildlife Management Units, or portions of Wildlife Management Units, that contain an area where CWD was detected.

Q. What are the rules for carcass transportation and disposal within the Flathead Indian Reservation?

A. Deer, elk and moose taken in the FIR may be transported to a camp, a private residence for processing, a taxidermist, a processor, or a CWD sample collection site, provided all portions of the spinal column remain at the site of the kill or such parts are disposed of in any Class II Landfill in Montana. The head with neck attached can be brought to the CSKT Wildlife Management Program (406 6th ave. East, Polson, Montana) for CWD testing.

** Nothing in this section shall apply to the transportation or disposal of deer, elk and moose taken by any Tribal agency or CSKT Wildlife staff.*

Q. What is CSKT doing to manage CWD?

A. Where CWD is detected, the CSKT Wildlife Management Program will develop a herd management plan that will aim to keep prevalence of the disease at ≤5% in the affected population. Potential management tools include increasing harvest, especially of antlered animals; targeted removal in limited areas around CWD detections; minimizing large groupings of deer by removing or fencing attractants and through hazing or dispersal hunts; and carcass transport restrictions

Q. Why is CWD management important?

A. Without management, CWD will spread, increase in prevalence, and may cause population declines in deer, elk and moose as it has in other states. CSKT Wildlife is committed to doing all it can to keep wildlife on the Reservation healthy so that subsistence hunting can continue for generations to come. CSKT Wildlife's goal is to effectively manage the disease in wild populations and limit the prevalence and spread of CWD. There are no vaccines for CWD so management and prevention are critical to help prevent long-term population decline in infected herds, and slow the decline of wildlife-related recreation opportunities.

Q. Where is CSKT looking for CWD?

A. CSKT's Wildlife Management Program has identified priority surveillance areas based on known CWD positives within Montana and along our Reservation borders. These areas have been identified as those at highest risk of becoming infected through the natural spread of the disease. We will periodically update our priority surveillance areas as new information on CWD

within the state becomes available. Since CWD could be spread through the inadvertent movement of a CWD-positive deer or elk carcass into the Reservation, we also plan to periodically survey other areas of the reservation that fall outside of the high-priority surveillance zones.

Q. Can CWD be eradicated?

A. After decades of CWD management across the country, most agencies and researchers agree that CWD cannot be eradicated once it infects a herd. States have attempted eradication and set up unreasonable expectations with hunters and the public. Eradication is not the goal of CSKT Wildlife.

Q. Can humans be infected by CWD?

A. There is no known transmission of CWD to humans. However, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that hunters harvesting a deer, elk, or moose from an area where CWD is known to be present have their animal tested for CWD prior to consuming the meat, and to not consume the meat if the animal tests positive.

Some simple precautions should be taken when field dressing deer, particularly in CWD Management Zones:

- Wear rubber gloves and eye protection when field dressing your deer.
- Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing is completed.
- Avoid processing and consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out a carcass will essentially remove these parts.)

Q. How will CWD impact deer and elk herds of the Flathead Indian Reservation?

A. The short answer is we don't know. If CWD infects enough animals, it will probably reduce the herd in the long term. Other states have seen deer populations decline when CWD infects 20 to 40 percent of a herd. In Wyoming, heavily infected herds of mule deer declined 21 percent per year and whitetails declined by 10 percent. Colorado saw a 45 percent decline in infected mule deer herds over 20 years. Clearly, if left unchecked, CWD could result in large-scale population declines.

Because the distribution and intensity of CWD infections are variable across a broad landscape, the impacts across the landscape will also be variable. Keeping deer population numbers down

and dispersed as well as reducing buck:doe ratios may keep the prevalence low and manageable. CSKT Wildlife's focus will be on managing CWD-infected areas for prevalence at 5 percent or lower and preventing spread. This may also mean keeping deer or elk numbers low in certain areas.

Q. How do you test for CWD?

A. The standard test processes an animal's lymph nodes or brainstem for evidence of CWD. These samples can only be collected from dead animals and are submitted to a certified CWD-testing diagnostic laboratory. Unfortunately, there are no non-invasive CWD tests for live animals.

Q. How long will it take for me to find out if my deer has CWD?

A. If your animal is sampled by CSKT Wildlife staff at a check station or office (406 6th Ave. East, Polson, Montana), results will be posted online (fwp.mt.gov/cwd) within three weeks. Hunters will be given a code to check their results directly from the fwp.mt.gov/cwd website, and CSKT Wildlife biologists will also contact hunters as soon as the results are reported. We recommend obtaining results before consuming meat from deer killed within a CWD Management Zone. If your harvested deer is found to be positive, you can dispose of the meat appropriately at a landfill.

Q. How can you tell if an animal has CWD?

A. Animals with CWD cannot be diagnosed based on clinical signs because they are unspecific and mild at the beginning of the disease. Diagnosis is therefore made by testing tissues from the central nervous system and lymph nodes. Symptoms of infected animals can include emaciation, excessive salivation, lack of muscle coordination, difficulty swallowing, excessive thirst and excessive urination. Clinically ill animals may have an exaggerated wide posture, may stagger and carry the head and ears lowered, and are often found consuming large amounts of water. However, these symptoms don't appear until the terminal stage of the disease. It is important to remember that infected animals may not have symptoms but can still be shedding infectious prions. Most CWD-positive deer sampled appeared outwardly normal and healthy.

Q. What happens if I shoot a sick deer?

A. If you have harvested an animal that appears sick, contact the CSKT Wildlife hotline at (406-275-2774) and select option 4.

Q. What is a Special CWD Hunt?

A. A Special CWD Hunt may be initiated by Tribal Council following the detection of CWD outside of existing CWD Management Zones. This hunt may be held during the hunting season and will be designed to sample enough harvested animals to determine the prevalence and

spatial distribution of the disease. Special rules and regulations may apply and will be communicated with the public. All animals harvested during a special hunt must be brought to a Tribal CWD Hunt check stations or Division of Fish, Wildlife, Recreation and Conservation office (406 6th Ave. East, Polson, Montana) for sampling and to be tagged with a tag reading “CWD TEST” and a unique identification number. To prevent spread of the disease, new CWD Management Zone boundaries may be defined, and brain and spinal column material of animals taken during a Special CWD Hunt will not be allowed out of the Management Zone boundaries (*unless the head is being brought to the CSKT Wildlife offices in Polson*). The Special CWD Hunt will end when enough deer are sampled to precisely measure the prevalence and spatial distribution of the disease, which is estimated to be between 150-400 animals.

Q. Why should ranchers and farmers care about CWD?

A. CSKT Wildlife uses hunters as a key tool to help ranchers, farmers and other landowners manage the impact of wildlife on their property and to their crops and livestock. If CWD were to increase in prevalence, CSKT Wildlife would anticipate some localized decline in hunting interest. Recent research has shown that plants, including plants used for livestock food, can uptake CWD prions from the soil. If continued research shows that animals can catch CWD by eating infected plants, it could have huge repercussions on the agricultural industry. Concerns nationally and internationally about CWD transmission through feed has led many states and other countries to restrict the sale of such products from CWD-positive areas.

Q. Why should compost owners care about CWD?

A. Composting facilities sometimes take animal carcasses for use in composting piles. If animals from a CWD infected area is used in composting, it may affect the ability of the business owner to sell their contaminated compost. CWD is spread through soil, and infected compost could be a vector of continued spread.