

Summary of CWD Response Plan Actions

BACKGROUND

- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) affects members of the deer family.
- It is caused by an infectious protein that is spread among deer through bodily fluids.
- It is always fatal and there is currently no vaccine or treatment.
- Incubation period is long; 18 to 24 months from exposure to death. One deer can infect many others.
- Once it is well established in an area (spread beyond a 1-mile radius), eradication is highly unlikely. Only if discovered early, while localized with a low prevalence rate is there any hope of eradication.
- Importation of live deer is the largest risk factor for the introduction of CWD. Infected carcass parts from CWD areas also present risk.

ONGOING SURVEILLANCE EFFORTS

- Since 2002, WRD has tested over 10,000 deer. Sampling intensity increased in 2019 with the latest scientific developments and WRD currently collects about 1,500 samples per year.
- WRD uses a risk-based surveillance system designed for early detection of CWD. Sampling intensity in each county depends upon risk factors such as captive deer facilities, # of taxidermists and processors, past sampling effort, and distance to known CWD areas.

RESPONSE PLAN

Goal: Detect CWD early, determine the prevalence and geographic extent, eradicate if possible or minimize spread.

If CWD is discovered in Georgia (or within 5 miles of the state line)

- Implement the predefined communications plan and designate members of the multi-agency response team operating under common Incident Command System structure.
- Establish a disease management zone in each county within a 5-mile radius around the positive sample.
- Sample intensively within a 1-mile radius to determine prevalence and geographic extent.
- Samples will be collected from hunter-killed deer at self-serve freezers placed around both management zones. Other methods include sharpshooting, issuance of special permits, and testing road-killed deer. More testing may be required in zones or counties they overlap.
- If local deer populations are over-abundant (e.g., over 40 deer per square mile), encourage increased harvest through regulation.
- Identify, sample, and quarantine any high-fence enclosures (deer farms involve GA Dept. of Agriculture) in all zones.
- Prohibit taking high-risk carcass parts out of designated zones.
- Promote feeding/baiting guidelines that reduce impacts on disease transmission.

Managing CWD in the long term if eradication isn't possible.

- Once initial prevalence and geographic extent of CWD are assessed, zones will be adjusted accordingly.
- The disease appears to form clusters of positives and intensive efforts to remove these clusters is critical to manage the disease. This surgical approach entails removing deer in the immediate vicinity of where a positive deer is found (i.e., go sit on that same food plot for several days and kill the doe groups or bucks using that immediate area).
- Avoid large-scale intensive herd reductions. Maintaining good relationships with landowners and a huntable population of deer is crucial to the future of disease management.