



# Chronic Wasting Disease Best Management Practices

**Project Justification:** Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is transmitted directly through animal-to-animal contact and indirectly through contact with objects or environment contaminated with infectious material. CWD is contagious and can be transmitted freely within and among cervid populations. No treatments or vaccines are currently available, the disease is 100% fatal. No methods currently exist that can remove CWD from the landscape. CWD has expanded its footprint at an alarming annual rate. Continued expansion of CWD would negatively impact economic, environmental, and cultural values associated with cervids. To do everything possible for the cervid resource to be sustainable for our future generations, we need to take every precaution necessary to slow the expansion of CWD. Private landowner involvement will be critical for success.

**Project Objective:** Develop a coalition of private landowners to develop a list of non-regulatory, voluntary guidelines for CWD Best Management Practices that will assist state agencies and landowners to discover, manage, and mitigate the negative impacts of CWD as well as educating recreational users.

## Prevention of CWD, Introduction & Establishment

### 1. Live Animal Movement

- a. Strongly discourage all human-assisted live cervid movements onto member organization lands.

### 2. Carcass Movement

- a. Support and/or advocate for State/Provincial efforts restricting the movement of high-risk cervid carcass parts.
- b. Importation and exportation of intact cervid carcasses or carcass parts except boned out meat, clean hide with no head attached, clean skull plate with antlers attached, clean antlers, finished taxidermy specimens, and clean upper canine teeth and jawbones, from all states should not occur. Member organizations should educate recreational users about the risks of moving potentially infected high-risk cervid parts. Further, in CWD positive areas, member organizations should consider educating recreational users about recommended carcass disposal methods and/or local disposal options.

Member organizations should prohibit all human-assisted movement of cervid carcasses, or carcass parts of concern, from outside lands onto member organization lands. Similarly, member organizations should advise recreational users against moving whole carcasses or high-risk parts from member organization lands to other lands. When possible, on-site processing and disposal is preferred.

### 3. Reproductive Products of Cervid Origin

- a. Strongly discourage the importation of reproductive products of cervid origin like reproductive tissues, semen, embryos, germplasm.





#### 4. Unnatural Concentration of Cervids

- a. Member organizations should strive to discourage:
  - i. baiting and feeding of wild cervids
  - ii. placement of minerals, granules, blocks, or other supplements for wild cervids
  - iii. provide hay and other feed for domestic animals in a manner that does not congregate wild cervids
  - iv. use of other cervid attractants such as scent lures, foods, flavors, scents, pour-on's, sprays, etc.
- b. In those states where baiting/feeding is a strong part of the culture, member organizations could consider a stepped approach targeted at reducing baiting/feeding practices over a period of time.

#### Surveillance of CWD

Surveillance for initial detection of CWD is an ongoing activity. Early detection is critical to managing CWD effectively and for eliminating it when/if possible.

- 1. Support and promote recreational user education on the importance of CWD sampling and the value of early detection.**
- 2. Encouraging recreational user participation in state agency organized CWD sampling efforts and proactively reporting any suspect animals.**
- 3. Encourage state agencies to be aggressive in CWD sampling efforts to facilitate early detection.**
- 4. Educate recreational users on the current inter- and intra-state carcass transport controls.**
- 5. Proactively educate recreational users and provide them current CWD educational materials.**

**6. Support and promote research that will improve CWD testing and/or management.**

**7. Surveillance to "monitor" CWD in an affected population.**

**8. Support state agencies that are implementing their CWD response plans.**

**9. A communications strategy should be designed to build support for CWD response actions.**

#### Management of CWD

##### 1. CWD Response Plans

- a. CWD coalition member organizations should be familiar with state agency response plans for the geography of their ownership and identify ways to participate in and support state agency efforts in the event of detection of CWD. Member organizations should also have an internal plan in place prior to detection of CWD. Essential elements of the internal plan should include, but not limited to pre-appointed contacts/spokespersons, pre-prepared communication materials (templates) for outreach to recreational users, surveillance, disease management, and plans to supplement and assist state agencies. Immediately following CWD detection, it is the role of member organizations to participate (where needed) and advocate support for state agency provisions and plans. Coordination with state agencies is imperative. Recreational licenses should include provision to allow for the implementation of the actions in the plan along with response and management items below.

##### 2. Initial Response to the First CWD Detection Should Include:

- a. A communications strategy to recreational users should be designed to build support for and require participation with state agency





response plans and actions, noting that such actions may be necessary on a long-term basis.

- b. Support and participate with state agencies in surveillance/monitoring activities, including granting access to member organizations' property for surveillance and testing and communication to recreational users regarding the surveillance and testing activities.
- c. Assist state agencies in establishing testing sites and or sample drop off points.
- d. Require all recreational users to comply with all state agency CWD plans and regulations, including but not limited to surveillance, testing, baiting, and carcass disposal. Educational materials should be provided to recreational users regarding CWD, state agency plans and requirements, testing, processing, and carcass disposal.

### 3. Managing CWD Prevalence

- a. Continued communications with and education of recreational users.
- b. Continued support of state agency efforts for surveillance, testing, and elimination of CWD, including property access.
- c. Continued requirement for recreational users to comply with all state agency CWD plans and regulations, including but not limited to surveillance, testing, baiting, and carcass disposal.
- d. Encourage recreational users to harvest cervids at levels needed to maintain a healthy herd and work with state agencies to develop support and implement a cervid harvest strategy within CWD-positive areas.

- e. Allow property access to state agencies for targeting the portion of the population most likely to have CWD and targeting animals in known CWD hotspots. Prioritize recreational user involvement where feasible.

## Supporting Activities

### 1. Communications are critical to prevention and minimization of CWD and its impacts. Communications build support within CWD Coalition member organizations and their staff. Effective communications with recreational users of the landowning members of the Coalition are critical to prevention, surveillance, and implementation of agreed BMPs and management policies.

- a. Commit to open communications between landowners, their staff, and recreational users.
- b. Landowners are encouraged to provide web links on their public-facing recreational webpages to accurate websites that contain general information about CWD, state-specific CWD information, surveillance and response activities, relevant regulations, public health concerns, recommendations for hunters and information indicating how they can help, reporting procedures for sick or dead cervids, and testing for harvested cervids.
- c. Encourage recreational users to actively participate in state testing programs and provide incentives to participate.
- d. Support surveys of recreational users and the public to collect meaningful, actionable data to increase positive stakeholder engagement.
- e. Support communications that inform the recreational users of the future impacts of CWD on cervid hunting and game management (lower





cervid densities, lower age buck harvest, higher bag limits, doe hunting, no feeding/baiting).

## **2. Support Research through advocacy or other means to identify:**

- The most effective techniques for prevention, surveillance, and management; prion detection and diagnostics; and disease epidemiology.
- Human dimensions issues such as the impact of CWD on hunting practices, hunter retention and participations rates, and on hunting-related expenditures.
- The cost of CWD to state and provincial economies.
- The costs of CWD to landowners, recreational users, and other stakeholders.
- Sources of funding for CWD prevention, surveillance, and management.

## **3. Landowner Policy, Public Policy, and Regulations:**

- Work closely with state agencies to have input on management responses, regulations and provide outreach to recreational users to implement CWD Coalition BMPs and regulations.
- Develop policies and approaches for implementation of the BMPs developed by the CWD Coalition.
- Where feasible, implement Coalition BMPs through recreational leases/licenses, permits and public access agreements.
- Advocate for sensible legislation that would increase the CWD knowledge base and help manage and mitigate negative impacts of the disease. This could include general funding for CWD research and/or promoting policies developed by the Coalition.

## **4. CWD and Public Health. Promote the following practices to all recreational users:**

- Wear protective gloves and wash hands when handling cervids.
- Disinfect field equipment when handling cervids or any other wildlife or carcasses.
- Minimize sawing through the bone and cutting through the brain and spinal cord.
- Do not consume meat from animals that appear sick or are found dead of unknown causes.
- Do not consume meat or other tissues from CWD-positive animals.
- Follow best practices and state regulations for carcass disposal, and do not transport carcasses across state lines.
- Follow guidance from wildlife and public health agencies.



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