

How should I dispose of the bones and offal from my deer?

Bones and offal can be disposed through rendering, burial, incineration or landfill.

What precautions should taxidermist take when handling the head?

Common-sense precautions should be applied to all taxidermy work. Always minimize the handling of the brain, tonsils, and other organs in the head. Wear disposable gloves when handling these items. Tools used in taxidermy work should be cleaned and sanitized after use.



For more information please view updated information on the following web sites:

Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
<http://www.mndeerhunters.com/>

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
<http://www.dnr.state.us/hunting/index.html>

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
<http://www.mda.state.mn.us>

University of Minnesota
<http://www.cvm.umn.edu/cahfs>

Minnesota Department of Health
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/>

Minnesota Board of Animal Health
<http://www.bah.state.mn.us/>

United States Department of Agriculture at
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov>



CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Information on
Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)
for deer hunters, meat
processors and consumers.



Questions and Answers for deer hunters, meat processors and consumers

What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)?

CWD is a fatal brain and nervous system disease found in deer and elk in certain parts of North America. CWD is caused by an abnormally shaped protein called a prion, which can damage brain and nerve tissue.

Transmission between animals is likely by animal-to-animal contact and/or contamination of the habitat by a diseased animal.

What are the symptoms of CWD?

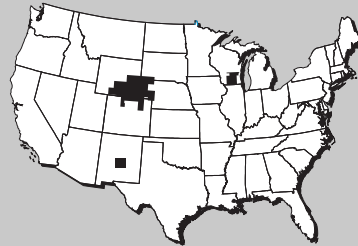
Infected deer and elk show progressive weight loss with accompanying behavioral changes. In later stages of the disease, infected animals become emaciated (thus "wasting" disease). Other signs include staggering, consuming large amounts of water, excessive urination, and drooling. If you see a deer showing these signs or acting strangely, contact the local Department of Natural Resources office.

Is CWD transmissible to humans?

There is no evidence CWD can be transmitted to humans. Epidemiologists with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have found no evidence that prion-related disease in humans occurs more often in hunters and consumers of wild game than in the general population. More than 16 years of monitoring in affected areas of Colorado found no disease in people living there. Ongoing public health surveillance is important to fully assess the potential risk.

Is it safe to eat venison?

The prions have never been found in muscle meat, even in infected deer. Officials are not recommending any general restrictions on consumption of deer meat. However, as a precaution, it is recommended that you do not eat deer or elk brains, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils or lymph glands (the tissue where the prions accumulate).



■ Represents the affected areas in wild herds.

Has CWD ever been found in Minnesota?

CWD was discovered in a single animal on one central Minnesota elk farm in August 2002. However, the disease has never been found in wild deer in Minnesota. Cases have been found in wild deer in South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, New Mexico and Saskatchewan, Canada. In addition to the single Minnesota case, CWD has been found in captive deer or elk in Colorado, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana Wyoming and Saskatchewan.

What is being done in Minnesota to monitor wild and captive deer and elk herds for CWD?

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is testing thousands of animals from Minnesota's wild deer population. The Minnesota Board of Animal Health monitors captive deer and elk herds in the state. Also, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture obtains samples from captive deer and elk herds at slaughter plants.

What precautionary steps should hunters take when field dressing deer or handling meat?

Although there is no evidence that CWD is a human health risk, it is best to avoid unnecessary contact with the deer's brain, tonsils, spleen, spinal cord and lymph glands - the parts of a deer in which CWD-causing prions accumulate. Good field-dressing technique is important including the use of disposable rubber gloves to minimize contact with tissue that could harbor the CWD prion. Proper techniques should be used regardless as other known potential hazards such as E.coli can be prevented through good handling practices.

What precautionary steps should meat processors take when handling deer and elk meat products?

It is important to minimize handling of the brain, tonsils, spleen, spinal cord and lymph glands. Meat should be processed without splitting the backbone. All cuts used in steaks and chops can be removed from the carcass as boneless cuts. One knife or handsaw should be designated for head removal. It is also important to ensure thorough cleaning and sanitizing of knives, saws, grinders and other meat-cutting tools. Meat trimmings should be inspected and all lymph glands removed before grinding and sausage making. All equipment must be completely disassembled and all meat scraps removed before the equipment is used again. All parts should be washed with a detergent specifically designed for cleaning meat equipment. Equipment should then be rinsed with clean water, sanitized with a chemical sanitizer or 180 degrees Fahrenheit water and allowed to air dry. These sound sanitation practices protect against known food safety concerns.

How is CWD diagnosed?

CWD is diagnosed through microscopic examination of brain samples from dead deer or elk.

