

Executive Summary

After more than seven years of chronic wasting disease (CWD) management in Wisconsin, it is increasingly clear that controlling CWD in Wisconsin's free-ranging white-tailed deer will be extremely challenging, and will require a commitment of human and financial resources over an extended period of time. The management of disease in free-ranging wildlife populations generally is difficult, expensive, and controversial, particularly when significant population reduction is a part of the plan. Control of CWD in a high density, free-ranging, white-tailed deer population is unprecedented. Yet, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is not currently willing to accept the eventual spread of chronic wasting disease across the state. CWD has the potential for significant impacts on the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin.

Deer hunting is enjoyed by over 700,000 hunters in the state, providing nearly 7 million days of hunting recreation, and generating nearly \$1.4 billion in total impact to the state's economy each year. Because of the special significance of deer to the Ojibwe people, CWD also poses a real threat to these tribes and tribal culture.

The DNR has public trust responsibility for managing wildlife and ensuring the health of wildlife populations in the state. There are real health risks to deer and elk from CWD and ongoing questions about possible health risks to humans and livestock. Additionally, there are secondary risks to the state's economy, socio-cultural traditions and ecosystem from the effects of the disease or its management.

The currently identified geographic distribution of CWD is substantially larger than was known



CWD positive 3-year old doe showing clinical signs of the disease before being shot by a DNR warden in Columbia County, August, 2006.

in 2002 and is likely increasing. Given the difficulty in managing CWD in free-ranging deer, magnitude of deer reductions required to significantly impact the disease, and declining political and social support, eliminating CWD from Wisconsin is unlikely.

There is still a need, however, to take steps to effectively manage CWD regardless of the continued challenges. We are therefore establishing the following goal for the management of CWD over the next 5 years: **Minimize the area of Wisconsin where CWD occurs and the number of infected deer in the state.**




University of Wisconsin researcher uses telemetry equipment to locate a radio-collared deer in the CWD zone.

This goal indicates a shift in our management approach by accepting a CWD endemic area in southern Wisconsin, and at the same time, focusing CWD control efforts on limiting CWD to and controlling its intensity and distribution in that area of the state.

Advances in understanding about the ecology and epidemiology of CWD in Wisconsin have contributed significantly to informing our management actions. Yet there is no clear prescription for managing CWD. The DNR will need to continue intensive monitoring of CWD prevalence and distribution in order to make decisions on CWD management using an adaptive management approach. We believe that the results of our ongoing monitoring of CWD in the state's wild deer along with advances from research into the epidemiology of the disease over the next 5 years will allow the state to better evaluate the effectiveness of management actions on controlling CWD.

The Key Objectives of this Management Plan are to:

- ◆ Prevent New Introductions of CWD
- ◆ Respond to New Disease Foci
- ◆ Control Distribution and Intensity of CWD
- ◆ Increase Public Recognition and Understanding of CWD Risks
- ◆ Address the Needs of our Customers
- ◆ Enhance the Scientific Information about CWD



The plan includes a number of specific management and monitoring actions that will be taken in order to achieve the overall goal and the individual objectives established. These actions include:

- ◆ Implementing the 2008 hunting season structure as the basic season structure for all units in the CWD Management Zone through 2010 with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the season structure in reducing deer populations after the 2010 season and after the 2013 season.
- ◆ Issuing landowner hunting permits in the CWD Management Zone that are valid from the close of the regular hunting season until March 31.
- ◆ Ensuring hunters have the option of having their deer tested for CWD in areas with the highest prevalence of the disease.
- ◆ Cooperating with food pantries and meat processors in the CWD Management Zone to provide hunters options for donating deer.
- ◆ Pursuing a statewide ban on the feeding and baiting of deer to reduce the risk of transmission of CWD or other serious cervid diseases in new areas.
- ◆ Begin a third round of surveillance outside of the CWD Management Zone, beginning in 2011 and concluding by 2013.
- ◆ Encouraging the proper disposal of deer carcasses from areas inside and outside of Wisconsin where CWD has been detected.
- ◆ Working jointly with DATCP for federal and state funding, reducing the number of animals escaping from captive cervid farms, increasing compliance with monitoring, testing, record keeping and cervid movement regulations, and expeditiously depopulating, securing, and decontaminating cervid farms with CWD-positive animals.

- ◆ Using survey data to better understand public opinions about CWD management and to develop, test, and refine messages and delivery mechanisms that enhance public support for CWD management.
- ◆ Continuing to cooperate with DHS to maintain the registry of persons known to have consumed venison from CWD positive deer.
- ◆ Supporting and cooperating with research to better assess the risks that CWD may pose to humans and livestock, including farmed cervids.
- ◆ Continuing efforts to seek new funding to support management-oriented research on CWD.
- ◆ Monitoring trends in CWD prevalence and disease patterns in the known affected area.
- ◆ Cooperate with Indian tribes to develop action plans for the management of CWD on reservation lands or ceded territories.
- ◆ In cooperation with local citizens and the Conservation Congress, and with approval from the Natural Resources Board, conducting focused sharpshooting on public and private lands where permission can be obtained in areas of disease clusters along the edges of the known CWD distribution using DNR-trained citizens and agency employees.

The goal, specific objectives, and management actions established for addressing CWD were developed based on the best scientific information currently available. As new information becomes available, and we monitor and evaluate progress in managing CWD—steps will be taken to adapt our management approaches and actions. This adaptive management strategy is essential because the understanding of CWD epidemiology and efficacy of CWD management techniques in free-ranging populations is still developing. As additional information about CWD in Wisconsin and elsewhere becomes available, we will continue to modify our CWD management strategies and techniques to increase their effectiveness.