



## Frequently Ask Questions

### Landowner's Inquiry into CWD Implications on Private Lands and CWD Testing

#### **Q: What are the chances of finding CWD on my ranch?**

A: Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has been conducting Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) surveillance on hunter-harvested deer and roadkill deer since 2002, and more than 38,000 samples have been tested for CWD. This sampling effort provides TPWD with statistical confidence that CWD does not exist at a significant prevalence rate (if at all) in the free-ranging deer populations outside of the established CWD Zones. The chances of finding CWD on your ranch are very slim and additional CWD surveillance efforts by TPWD this hunting season should not be cause for any alarm.

#### **Q: What are the benefits of CWD testing deer harvested from my ranch?**

A: A healthy disease-free deer population is critical for landowners and wildlife managers to maximize potential of the deer herd, whether that is for recreational enjoyment or as a source of income. It is to your benefit to monitor for CWD each year to ensure you maintain a healthy deer population. CWD testing hunter-harvested deer from your ranch provides confidence to you and your hunters that CWD is not present in the deer population on your property. More importantly, annual monitoring would allow for early detection of the disease, providing an opportunity to possibly eliminate the establishment of CWD in the deer population.

#### **Q: What will happen if CWD is discovered on my ranch?**

A: There is no single standardized approach to responding to a CWD positive in a free-ranging deer population. We understand that hunting is an essential and longstanding contributor to the state's culture, economy, and land values. Ensuring that heritage continues on private lands is very important to TPWD as well as maintaining the health and sustainability of our native white-tailed and mule deer populations. As such, any management strategies deployed will reflect our goals of limiting impacts on hunting activities, maintaining confidence of hunters and landowners, and protecting our big game resources.

Early detection and containment strategies are essential to limit the spread and distribution of CWD from the affected ranch or general area where it may be found. Containment is the most likely disease management strategy to combat CWD in a free-ranging environment. Eradication is a less likely strategy but must be reserved as an option in the unlikely event that circumstances warrant. TPWD has followed a strategy of CWD containment in areas where CWD is known to exist in free-ranging deer populations in Texas. Understanding several factors that could affect disease prevalence and spread (e.g., geographic extent of the disease, infection rates, how and when the disease was introduced to the area, fence height that may limit immigration/emigration, etc.) will help determine the most appropriate response to address any CWD discovery. Ultimately, TPWD's management strategy will be devised in consultation with Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and affected landowners, focusing efforts on limiting the distribution and prevalence of the disease. With any management strategy, some

reduction in the deer population is likely to be recommended unless deer densities are already at low numbers (e.g., Hueco Mountain area in far West Texas and in the Northwest Panhandle). The level of population reduction depends on whether the goal is to eliminate CWD in a free-ranging deer population, which may have some practicality in the most extraordinary of circumstances, or more likely, to control the spread of CWD and reduce or maintain prevalence rates. Reducing a population density to some level much lower than the current population density might be appropriate to contain CWD in a limited area by decreasing transmission and ultimately prevalence rates. Density goals for CWD management must be determined on a case by case basis utilizing the many factors that influence disease transmission. TPWD and TAHC will always use the best science available and take into account all ramifications of the disease and management actions before decisions are made. If CWD is discovered on your ranch, the type of response will depend on the circumstances, but landowners might expect some of the general process listed below to occur.

- Once a CWD positive is discovered in a white-tailed deer or mule deer, TAHC and TPWD will contact the ranch owner and open dialogue on next steps to address the disease discovery.
  - Additional sampling will likely be recommended to determine the geographic extent, prevalence rates, possible sources for the introduction of CWD, and help to determine the appropriate disease management response. Both agencies will work in cooperation with the affected property owner to determine the best approach to manage the disease.
  - Additional sampling through adequate hunter harvest may be the preferred option, as it would allow the landowner to utilize hunting as a potential income source while helping to meet CWD sampling goals. However, Department staff may recommend additional sampling to occur outside of normal hunting seasons if traditional hunting is unsuccessful at acquiring a sufficient number of samples.
  - Beyond those initial steps listed above, other CWD management strategies may be addressed through regulation changes such as the establishment of CWD zones found in the Trans Pecos, Panhandle, and Medina County area. Such a zone may include associated restrictions on live-animal movements, carcass part movement restriction, and mandatory CWD sampling of hunter harvested animals.
  - In the event that a CWD-positive deer is detected in a deer breeding facility, TAHC will issue a quarantine and develop a herd plan for the facility. A herd plan will be developed for all trace facilities that provided susceptible species to or received susceptible species from the facility within an epidemiologically specified timeframe. These herd plans will require CWD testing surveillance and carcass movement restrictions among other requirements designed to manage CWD at the facility, while providing conditions under which deer may be moved from or liberated onto the property.

**Q: What are some of the different types of disease management strategies available to manage CWD?**

A: Strategies may include:

- Voluntary or Mandatory CWD check stations to test hunter-harvested deer

- Restrictions on baiting or feeding that unnaturally concentrate deer
- Restrictions on unnatural movement of deer
- Restrictions on the movement and disposition of certain deer carcass parts
- Herd plans developed by TAHC in consultation with TPWD for CWD infected or exposed sites
- Public education about CWD and how landowners/hunters can help prevent or reduce the risk of spreading CWD
- Manage for lower deer densities
  - Hunter harvest is the preferred method to reduce deer density
- Eliminate a deer population on a ranch or specific area in the rare instance when eradication of CWD appears probable
- Sharpshooting by agency officials

**Q: Will TPWD eradicate deer on my property or within a certain geographic area around where the CWD positive was discovered?**

A: Elimination of CWD from a free-ranging deer population would be exceedingly difficult and likely impractical, except in the most contained environments, and in the most extraordinary of circumstances. For eradication to be a viable option, early detection of CWD is critical and the geographic extent of the disease must be limited.

**Q: Will I have to pay for CWD testing from deer I submit or my hunters submit?**

A: TPWD will pay for testing on all CWD samples collected by TPWD staff. Therefore, hunters and landowners are encouraged to contact TPWD wildlife biologists to have a deer tested for CWD or bring the deer to a CWD check station to be sampled. Landowners or hunters who collect and submit their own CWD samples to TVMDL are responsible for those CWD-testing expenses. Additionally, properties operating under a herd plan with TAHC or having regulatory obligations related to TPWD rules concerning CWD testing on breeder deer release sites, breeder facilities, TTT/TTP trap sites or DMP pens would be required to submit and pay for those samples, and these samples must be collected by a TAHC certified collector.

**Q: Will I be able to keep the antlers from a buck that I want to have tested for CWD?**

A: Yes, antlers may be retained by hunters who desire to have CWD samples collected. A proper tissue sample may be collected without damaging the cape or antlers.

**Q: Will I be able to take my trophy head to my taxidermist if I harvested that animal in a CWD zone in Texas or from a CWD positive state or country?**

A: Yes. TPWD understands that a trophy animal is very special to the hunter, and providing hunters the means to take their trophies to a taxidermist of their choice is important. TPWD also understands that some hunters may not have the skills or resources to cape a trophy or clean a skull, and that taxidermists are not always available in CWD zones. Therefore, TPWD regulations allow for an unskinned antlered-head of a susceptible species to be transported to a taxidermist, provided all brain

material, soft tissue, spinal column and any unused portions of the head are disposed of in a landfill in Texas permitted by TCEQ. Hunters need to complete a Deer Head Waiver form to transport a trophy head from a CWD zone in Texas or bring a trophy head into Texas. The Deer Head Waiver form is available on TPWD's website on the CWD page. NOTE: Hunters should be aware that unless transporting a trophy head as described in this paragraph, deer harvested within a CWD Zone may not be transported from that CWD Zone, except for the following:

- cut quarters with all brain and spinal cord tissue removed,
- boned meat,
- cut and wrapped meat,
- caped hides with skull not attached,
- skull plate with antlers attached and cleaned of all soft tissue, or
- finished taxidermy products.

**Q: Where should I dispose of inedible carcass parts or heads after I have submitted a CWD sample?**

A: In order to minimize the risk of spreading CWD through infected carcass parts and contaminating the environment, hunters or persons receiving deer carcasses are strongly encouraged to dispose of inedible carcass parts at the site of harvest (preferably buried) or in a landfill. Brain, eyes, lymph nodes, tonsils, spleen, and spinal cord are tissues where infectious CWD prions concentrate and should be disposed of in an appropriate location.

**Q: How will I be able to find out what the CWD test results are for the deer I submitted for testing?**

A: Results from CWD samples collected by TPWD staff will be made available on the TPWD CWD website within 2-4 weeks after collecting samples. Hunters or landowners will receive a CWD sample receipt with a unique identification number for each CWD sample. The results will be posted by the unique CWD sample number printed on the receipt. The website address is <http://tpwd.texas.gov/cwd/> and is printed on the receipt. Once on that web page, click on the link for CWD test results and enter the receipt number.

**Q: Should I require my hunters to test for CWD from deer or any susceptible species that they harvest on my ranch?**

A: Whether a landowner chooses to require hunters to have all deer (and other susceptible species) harvested on the ranch tested for CWD is a decision to be made between a landowner and the landowner's hunters. TPWD encourages landowners to submit as many samples as they wish to help provide more confidence that CWD is not in free-ranging deer populations beyond the areas where it is known to exist. Hunters and landowners should remember that mandatory sampling of hunter-harvested deer is required in any CWD Containment Zone (CZ) as well as some Surveillance Zones (SZ). Hunters should check annual hunting regulations for mandatory testing requirements in specific CWD zones.

**Q: Why is TPWD asking for help in collecting CWD samples this year?**

A: TPWD is increasing CWD sample collection efforts statewide in light of recent findings of CWD in captive deer breeding facilities as well as the discovery of CWD in a free-ranging mule deer in Hartley County. The increased surveillance will provide more confidence that CWD is not present in free-ranging white-tailed deer, mule deer, or other susceptible populations outside of the established CWD Zones. Because CWD testing is voluntary in the majority of the state, TPWD staff will be asking hunters and landowners for permission to sample hunter-harvested deer or any other susceptible species for CWD. Throughout deer seasons, staff will be at meat processing facilities, check stations, and other locations collecting samples. Established check stations locations will be posted on the TPWD CWD web page ([www.tpwd.texas.gov/cwd](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/cwd)). Hunters and landowners may also contact their local TPWD biologists for more information about CWD sample collections. Your local TPWD biologist can be found on the TPWD website at the following link [https://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/technical\\_guidance/biologists/](https://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/land/technical_guidance/biologists/).

**Q: Why should I submit CWD tests or encourage my hunters to submit CWD samples?**

A: In order to have a high degree of confidence that CWD is not present in the free-ranging deer populations outside of the established CWD Containment Zones, TPWD needs to collect and test as many samples as possible. TPWD's collection goal from free-ranging hunter-harvested deer for the 2016-17 deer season is greater than 7,000 samples. Our sampling plan calls for a specific number of CWD samples from each of the 41 different white-tailed deer population monitoring units called DMUs (deer management units). Achieving that goal will require cooperation from hunters and landowners as well as many others.

**Q: Are there other examples of where elimination or complete removal of an animal population is necessary to combat a disease outbreak?**

A: Population reductions are often a necessary and important option to combat and manage disease outbreaks. There are a number of examples in the livestock industry for cattle, sheep, and chickens where entire herds or flocks were eliminated to manage a disease outbreak. This type of response was justified as a measure to protect the greater livestock industry. Managing CWD in free-ranging deer populations is much more difficult than managing a disease outbreak in livestock, but similar disease management responses are appropriate in some situations, but only under the most extraordinary of circumstances.

**Q: Why is a live-testing method not used to test for CWD?**

A: TPWD regulations adopted in June 2016 allow ante-mortem testing under certain conditions and situations for permitted captive deer breeding facilities. However, since ante-mortem testing is not practical on free-ranging white-tailed deer or mule deer populations, samples are collected from deer harvested by hunters.

**Q: CWD is a relatively new disease so researchers are still learning about the epidemiology of CWD and developing best practices to combat CWD. How will new information about CWD be utilized by TPWD to manage the state's white-tailed deer and mule deer populations?**

A: TPWD is committed to using the best science available to combat CWD in free-ranging and captive cervid populations. TPWD will assess any new information and management strategies that become available, and determine how regulations may be modified to reflect the latest science available. TPWD will also continue to educate landowners, hunters, and concerned citizens about the importance of managing CWD. Easily accessible sources of information about CWD can be found at the following websites.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: [www.tpwd.texas.gov/cwd](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/cwd)

Texas Animal Health Commission: [www.tahc.state.tx.us](http://www.tahc.state.tx.us)

Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance: [www.cwd-info.org](http://www.cwd-info.org)

USGS National Wildlife Health Center:  
[www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease\\_information/chronic\\_wasting\\_disease/index.jsp](http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/chronic_wasting_disease/index.jsp)

Department of Health & Human Services Center for Disease Control:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/prions/cwd/index.html>