



**CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE TASK FORCE
Conference Call
June 12, 2012**

The conference call convened at 1:30 pm. Membership and others in attendance included:

Committee members:

Mitch Lockwood, *TPWD*

Dr. Don Davis, *TAMU-CVM**

Dr. Bob Dittmar, *Private Veterinarian*

Commissioner Dick Winters, *TAHC*

Warren Bluntzer, *Private Consultant*

Dr. Dan McBride, *Private Veterinarian*

Todd Franks, *Elk / Red Deer Producer*

Dr. Dan Baca, *USDA, APHIS*

Dr. Andy Schwartz, *TAHC*

Charley Seale, *Exotic Wildlife Association*

Juan Lino Garza, *Deer Breeder*

Dr. Scott Bugai, *Private Veterinarian, Deer Breeder*

Dr. Bill Eikenhorst, *Private Veterinarian*

Dr. Ken Waldrup, *DSHS **

Dr. Terry Hensley, *TAHC*

**Not in attendance*

Other Participants:

Alan Cain, *TPWD*

Ryan Schoeneberg, *TPWD*

Shawn Gray, *TPWD*

➤ **Conference Call Overview**

Mitch Lockwood welcomed everyone to the conference call and took a roll call of those participating in the call. He explained that the intent of the conference call was to update Task Force members of progress since the last meeting, including proposed actions discussed at recent TPW and TAH Commission meetings, and to provide an update on strategic CWD surveillance to occur in June.

➤ **TPWD Update**

Lockwood explained that TPWD Executive Director, Carter Smith had recently briefed the TPW Commission on CWD findings in the Hueco Mountains of New Mexico, recommendations of the CWD Task Force, and possible regulation changes the Department may seek during the August Commission meeting as a result of Task Force recommendations. Lockwood identified the following possible regulation changes and potential rules for the Containment Zone (CZ) and High Risk Zone (HRZ):

- TPWD proposed rule changes
 - Establish rules for a CZ and HRZ
 - Authorize the Executive Director to define the boundaries of the CZ and HRZ as CWD distribution is better defined in NM and/or TX
 - Public hearings will be conducted in the affected region prior to the August Commission meeting, during which proposed rules will be considered for adoption
- Containment Zone Proposal
 - Mandatory deer hunter check stations (for CWD sampling purposes)
 - No issuance of TTT or DMP permits
 - Authorize zero (0) deer to be possessed in any new deer breeder facility

- Permit movement of breeder deer and all other susceptible cervids from herds that have achieved a 5-year status
- High Risk Zone Proposal
 - Voluntary deer hunter check stations (for CWD sampling purposes)
 - Authorize deer trapping (e.g., TTT) for sites where at least 300 “Not Detected” CWD test results have been obtained for WTD and/or MD
 - Permit movement of breeder deer and all other susceptible cervids from herds that have achieved a 5-year status, but considering 3-year status requirement

➤ **TAHC Update**

Dr. Schwartz explained proposed regulation changes recently presented to the TAH Commission on June 7, 2012. The proposed TAHC rule would allow for the following if adopted by the TAHC Commission:

- Establish boundaries for a CZ and HRZ
- Creates rules that no susceptible species may be trapped and transported from or released within the CZ or HRZ without participating in a CWD monitored-herd-status program
- Create rules to allow susceptible species in the CZ and HRZ to be moved only from monitored herds that have obtained a 5-year status. The 5-year status cannot be inherited by acquiring animals from a 5-year-status facility; rather, the 5-year status must be obtained for the herd and for the soil on which the herd exists. For example, animals from a facility with 5-year status that are introduced to a facility with 1-year status will assume the 1-year status (i.e., a herd that establishes residence in either zone will assume the lesser status of the source or receiving facility).
- The Commission will consider comments regarding a 3-year status requirement (as opposed to 5-year status) for facilities within the HRZ. Either way, herd status of the source facility will not be inherited by a receiving facility in either zone. (i.e., a herd that establishes residence in either zone will assume the lesser status of the source or receiving facility).

Dr. Schwartz informed the Task Force that the TAH Commission approved the potential rule changes to be published in the Texas Register in order to receive public comment. It was also noted that any substantial additions to the proposal would require a new proposal. Thus recommendations for a 5-year status in the HRZ were proposed despite being more restrictive because the Commission may make rules less restrictive (e.g., 3-year status) but not more restrictive than what is published in the current proposal. Additional restrictions would require an amended or additional rule proposal.

Current TAHC entry requirements for any susceptible cervid include 5-year status from a CWD affected state and 3-year status for any non-affected states. Red deer were not included on the susceptible-species list until today, and they could be moved into Texas from a facility with no status. TAHC now considers red deer as a susceptible species, meaning imported red deer must come from a 3-year or 5-year status facility, depending on the source state.

➤ **Susceptible Cervid Movements Discussion**

Discussion regarding the 5-year status in both the CZ and HRZ ensued as there was some confusion as to what would be allowed with regards to movement within and out of each zone. Dr. Schwartz clarified and explained that the proposed rule would allow susceptible cervids to be moved out of the CZ and HRZ as long as the herd had a 5-year

status, and release into or within the zones could only occur if animals are released into a monitored herd. Requirements to release into a monitored herd would also include susceptible cervids coming from outside the zones, meaning those cervids could not be released to the wild. The intent of this rule is to reduce the number of potential hosts to CWD. Commissioner Winters and Warren Bluntzer recommended allowing no movement of susceptible species into or out of the CZ, and allowing movement only into monitored herds into the HRZ. Warren clarified that he was not recommending a permanent moratorium on movements within or from the CZ but rather such movement restrictions be in place until adequate CWD surveillance in the area has been conducted. Warren indicated it would be easier to have a more restrictive rule in place and then ease restrictions after the task force decides the appropriate response should a positive be found (i.e. movements into or out of a status herd).

There was some discussion about a loop hole in the current rules whereby a captive cervid breeder could reach a Level A status without having tested 20% of eligible mortalities over a multi-year period. For example, a deer breeder could have many mortalities over a 5-year period with none being tested prior to enrolling into the status program, and then enroll and 12 months later acquire Level A Status, which would allow movement of animals. The group agreed this was a concern and should be discussed in further detail during a subsequent meeting.

➤ **CWD Management Plan Update**

Mitch indicated he had received numerous comments about the CWD management plan recently presented to the Task Force for review. The input and comments were very much appreciated and will help to strengthen the document. Mitch stated that the CWD management plan was intended for an audience of professionals, conservation groups, and agency staff to help guide us in our response and management to CWD based on factual and scientific information. Additional documents are being prepared to provide clear and understandable information regarding CWD and CWD management actions for other audiences including landowners, hunters, and the public. In fact, TPWD has already developed a letter to provide landowners discussing voluntary sampling to be conducted this summer.

Commissioner Winters suggested we need a concise media package in order to provide a uniform message to the public. He elaborated that the cattle industry has a successful media model with regards to BSE and that same approach could be used to disseminate information regarding CWD. Charlie Seale also asked if there would be some documents with a consistent message regarding CWD that he and other conservation organizations could use to help answer questions and allay fears as well as inform others of potential regulation changes. Mitch indicated that he does not anticipate any agency-caused hysteria and we want to make sure this group helps to insure we are taking a calm approach to the possible detection of CWD in Texas and our response. TPWD and TAHC will be providing a media release and other information soon for Task Force members and other spoke persons to use so we do present a unified message.

➤ **Targeted Surveillance**

- TPWD staff have been coordinating with landowners in the CZ to secure sites for CWD sampling this summer
- Mitch stated that we will not be sampling without full permission, agreement, and cooperation from these private landowners.
- Sampling is completely voluntary, including testing for additional disease
- Landowner response has been very supportive with sampling sites secured in the Hueco and Cornudas Mountains as well as the Dell City area.

- Some landowners have offered to allow 35-40 mule deer to be collected for sampling and others are asking how many sample we need, but are very willing to allow mule deer or elk to be collected
- Staff have explained that we are looking for a minimum of 58 samples within the zone to have to have 95% confidence we could detect CWD at a 5 % prevalence. If landowners would like to sample more intensively we can certainly accommodate that request.

➤ **Minnesota Case of CWD in Red Deer Herd**

- Dr. Schwartz provided a brief update on the discovery of CWD in a red deer facility in Minnesota.
- CWD was detected in a 2-year-old female. Results showed a strong positive for CWD.
- This deer herd had been under CWD monitoring for 12 years.
- No deer had been added within the last 10 years.
- The facility owner has voluntarily allowed for the testing of 55 additional red deer that were pen mates and birth cohorts to the infected female red deer.
- The facility is 65 miles from the nearest CWD positive discovered in a wild white-tailed deer.
- The facility is near St. Paul where a high white-tailed deer density is present.
- Ninety-three (93) red deer have been imported to Texas from this facility since 2007, occurring over multiple years.
- These deer were distributed among 3 recipients including a shooter operation, a breeder, and a trader.
- These sites are under movement restrictions until TAHC can determine status of red deer and conduct trace backs as necessary.

➤ **Spontaneous CWD**

There was a brief discussion of the possibility of spontaneous CWD outbreaks. Dr. Baca provided an explanation regarding the possibility of spontaneous occurrence in CWD. Dr. Baca explained that spontaneous TSEs are believed to occur in cattle, sheep, and people but are different than epidemic strains of TSEs. Spontaneous occurrences of TSE are thought to happen in old animals where proteins are breaking down and a random misfolding of a prion protein could occur, and thus infect other proteins causing them to misfold. TSEs such as BSE become epidemic when feeding cattle parts from infected animals to other uninfected individuals. As the process continues, the TSE is spread. Dr. Baca indicated that cases in CWD has not been documented to be sporadic or spontaneous and is an epidemic disease. *In a follow-up conversation Alan Cain had with Dr. Baca he indicated that some theories suggest the origin of CWD may have been a result of spontaneous generation, but CWD strains today are epidemic. Incidentally, scientist and researchers studying TSEs indicate spontaneous rates of occurrence in cattle, sheep, and people are about one case per million.*

The conference call adjourned 3:15 pm.