

Mule deer hunters must follow new rules

AUSTIN – Wildlife officials are reminding mule deer hunters and landowners in far West Texas about new protocols developed as part of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) Chronic Wasting Disease response plan. The plan includes mandatory check stations for harvested deer and elk taken inside the CWD Containment Zone, which covers portions of Culberson, Hudspeth and El Paso counties. See map of CWD zones at <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/cwd>.

The response plan is being implemented after tissue samples from two mule deer in far West Texas this past summer tested positive for CWD. These are the first cases of CWD detected in Texas deer.

Hunters taking mule deer inside the Containment Zone during the general season, Nov. 23 – Dec. 9, are required to submit their harvest (unfrozen head) for CWD sampling at mandatory check stations within 24 hours of harvest.

"We recommend hunters in the Containment Zone and High Risk Zone quarter deer in the field and leave all but the quarters, backstraps and head at the site of harvest if it is not possible to bury the inedible carcass parts at least 6 feet deep on the ranch or take them to a landfill," said Shawn Gray, Mule Deer Program Leader for TPWD.

Hunters that harvest deer in the Containment Zone outside the general season under the authority of MLDP (Managed Lands Deer Permits) will need to call TPWD at (512) 221-8491 the day the deer is harvested to make arrangements to have the deer sampled for CWD.

In addition to protocols within the Containment Zone, TPWD has created a High Risk Zone for

voluntary CWD sampling during the hunting season. Biologists have been collecting voluntary mule deer harvest data in the region since 1980 and this year CWD sampling will be offered in addition to age and weight measurements.

Voluntary check stations will be set up at the following locations during the first three weekends of the general season, Saturday through Monday (Nov. 24–26, Dec. 1–3 and Dec. 8–10), from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Monday:

Midland at Naturally Fresh (Deer Processor) (1501 Elwyn) Bakersfield at Chevron Station (south of 110; Exit 294)

Sanderson at Slim's Auto Repair (823 West Oak; Intersection of US 90 and 285)

Alpine at Hip-O Taxidermy (east side of town on US 90, across from Dairy Queen)

CWD is a member of the group of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Other diseases in this group include scrapie in sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease) in cattle, and Cruetzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. CWD among cervids is a progressive, fatal disease that commonly results in altered behavior as a result of microscopic changes made to the brain of affected animals. An animal may carry the disease for years without outward indication, but in the latter stages, signs may include listlessness, lowering of the head, weight loss, repetitive walking in set patterns, and a lack of responsiveness. CWD is not known to affect humans.

There is no vaccine or cure for CWD, but steps have been taken to minimize the risk of the disease spreading from beyond the area

where it currently exists. For example, within the CWD Containment Zone, human-induced movements of wild or captive

deer, elk, or other susceptible species will be restricted and mandatory hunter check stations will be established.

Although wildlife officials cannot say how long the disease has been present in Texas or if it occurs in other areas of the state,

they have had an active CWD surveillance program for more than a decade.



Brownfield Middle School's theater department entertained students, faculty and visitors Tuesday afternoon with a production of "James and the Giant Peach." They took the play on the road later in the week for a UIL competition.

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