



Overview

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease that affects cervids (deer, elk, moose, and caribou). This wildlife disease has raised concern in regards to its implications for hunters who often come into direct contact with these animals, and for Indigenous and other communities that typically consume cervid meat. Economic impacts have also been reported, with a decline of Minnesota deer licenses purchased between 2017-2019 in regions affected by CWD.

Legislation

- In 2017, Congress introduced the Chronic Wasting Disease Management Act ([HR 4454](#)) to provide additional funding for CWD research and management efforts.
- Montana also passed a bill ([SJ 9](#)) in 2017 that creates an interim committee to study CWD impacts and strategies for its control
- Mississippi recently introduced a bill ([HB 450](#)) that would require CWD testing of white-tailed deer harvested within any enclosure.
- Minnesota released a [Comprehensive Plan](#) in 2017 with more than five bills addressing CWD with a focus on long-term control and prevention.
- In an effort to prevent the spread across state lines, New Jersey recently introduced [A.949](#) that would prevent the possession of deer or elk originating from outside the State.

KEY POINTS

- CWD disease, like many wildlife diseases, can spread through direct animal-to-animal contact, via passage of urine, saliva, blood, or feces, or through contact with carcasses of infected animals.
- As of 2020, 26 states have reported cases of CWD in free-ranging cervids.
- With the scientific uncertainty surrounding CWD, some researchers are concerned that CWD may be able to spread to humans and other mammals.
- Artificial congregation of cervids (i.e. agency feeding of free-roaming wildlife or in private hunting reserves) poses a high risk of CWD and other wildlife disease transmission.

Other Resources

- The [Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#) (WAFWA) developed the [Recommendations for Adaptive Management of Chronic Wasting Disease in the West](#)
- [Chronic Wasting Disease and Cervidae Regulations in North America](#) - MI Department of Natural Resources
- [CWD Fact Sheet](#) - U.S. Department of the Interior
- The U.S. Department of the Interior's 2002 [National Chronic Wasting Disease Plan](#)
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's [CWD Cervid Herd Certification Program](#)
- For more information, contact Ruth Musgrave at ruth@ncelenviro.org

