

*Our supporters and members have asked us to continue our educational and outreach role with regards to chronic wasting disease. We were proud to sponsor the January 2016 symposium on chronic wasting disease, the first event of this type ever held in Texas. We want to ensure stakeholders, interest groups, and the state agencies have the most accurate and up-to-date information possible.*

## **Texas Parks and Wildlife Special Commission hearing on proposed rules related to chronic wasting disease will be held June 20, 2016.**

The Special Commission meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup> is to hear public and resource witness testimony on proposed rules to enhance detection of chronic wasting disease and regulate the movement/transfer of whitetail deer. The proposed rules were originally published in the April 22, 2016 Texas Register, which can be found [here](#). Explanation and background begins on page 2853 of the Register. In order to accommodate some issues brought forth by the deer breeding community since publication, TPWD has included some amendments to the proposed rules. Appendix A is an executive summary of the current proposed rules with amendments; the complete rules with amendments are included on the agenda for the June 20<sup>th</sup> hearing. Click [here](#) to read the agenda.

The hearing begins at 9am at the J.J. Pickle Research Campus Commons Learning Center. Doors will open around 8AM, and there will be a table set up where witnesses must complete a short form. Most witnesses will sign up either “for” or “against” proposed rules. You may register as a witness without testifying, and your name will still be included in the public record.

“Resource witnesses” work for a state agency or other state funded enterprise, and should register “on” the issue, rather than “for” or “against.”

Each witness is given three minutes, and typically the order follows the order in which the sign in sheets were received. In other words, those who sign in early will go first. The Commission may call a resource witness to the podium at any time.

It is important that all interested parties are equally represented to present a balanced viewpoint to the Commission.

### **Introduction**

Deer hunting and deer management are extremely important to Texas’ hunting heritage and economy. Texas boasts 4 million free-ranging white-tailed deer and approximately 650,000 deer hunters. Deer hunters harvest an estimated 600,000 white-tailed deer on approximately 250,000 Texas farms and ranches annually. Deer hunting alone generates an estimated \$2.2 billion in economic activity annually, and is an important component of many rural economies.

There are approximately 1,300 permitted deer breeders in Texas. These permittees hold approximately 120,000 captive deer annually; each year, deer breeders liberate more than 25,000 deer to approximately 1,500 release sites. A 2007 study by the Ag and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University estimated deer breeding has a total economic impact of \$652 million, and supports 7,335 jobs.<sup>1</sup>

### **Background on CWD**

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, or prion diseases. Other TSEs include bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle (mad cow disease), scrapie in sheep, feline spongiform encephalopathy in cats, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. For additional information, click [here](#), and also refer to the section “Background Regarding CWD” published in the Texas Register along with the proposed rules.

This section of the Register also contains a brief history of the first discovery of CWD in whitetail at a deer breeding facility, subsequent discoveries at other facilities, and a history of TPWD rulemaking.

### **Rulemaking Background**

The first confirmation of CWD in whitetail deer in Texas occurred in June of 2015. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) quickly sought to identify, isolate, and contain the disease by adopting emergency breeder rules on August 18, 2015, which were extended on December 1, 2015. The emergency rules were subsequently replaced by interim rules approved by the Commission.

When drafting the rules, TPWD sought assistance from the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) because the TAHC is charged with protecting the health of Texas livestock. In this capacity, the agency has developed epidemiologically-based protocols to “prevent, control, and eradicate specific infectious animal diseases....” More information about TAHC can be found [here](#). Although there were many similarities in responding to a typical outbreak of a livestock disease, the protocols for CWD had to be adjusted to accommodate the high rate of deer movement between breeding facilities and to ranches for liberation.

As more data became available during the 2015-2016 whitetail season, TPWD contracted with the University of Texas Center for Public Policy Dispute Resolution (CPPDR) to facilitate a stakeholder process to develop replacement rules. The stakeholders met several times, and achieved consensus on many issues. The report, along with a list of participants, may be found [here](#).

The proposed rules based on the stakeholder process (published in the April 22<sup>nd</sup> Texas Register) were presented during the regular Commission meeting on May 26, 2016 with amendments. After several hours of testimony, the Commission determined they would not vote on the proposed rules that day. They directed TPWD staff to look for “reasonable opportunities” to simplify and/or soften the regulations as proposed without appreciably compromising the management of disease risk to the state’s entire herd, both captive and free range. Click [here](#) to listen to an audio recording of the hearing.

### **Summary of proposed rules**

CWD has a long incubation period during which time the deer may not exhibit any signs of the disease, so the protocols include testing over a period of time. TPWD is the only state agency that currently accepts live animal (ante-mortem) testing as well post-mortem. Generally

speaking, a breeding facility that tests a high percentage of deer, either living or deceased, over a long period of time, is considered to be a safer, low-risk facility.

In the proposed rules, deer breeding facilities are assigned one of three transfer categories: TC1, TC2 or TC3. “TC1” is considered to be the safest in terms of risk, meaning these facilities have been practicing the most stringent testing protocol for CWD. “TC3” are exposed or trace herds, meaning CWD has been detected at the facility; this is the highest risk category. Breeding facilities that begin as TC2 or TC3 may “test up” over a period of time to TC1.

In turn, the ranches that purchase or receive deer from the breeding facilities are given Class designations of Class I, Class II, or Class III. A ranch that receives deer only from a TC1 breeding facility is given a Class I designation. A ranch that receives deer from a TC1 and a TC2 facility is given a Class II designation, and so forth.

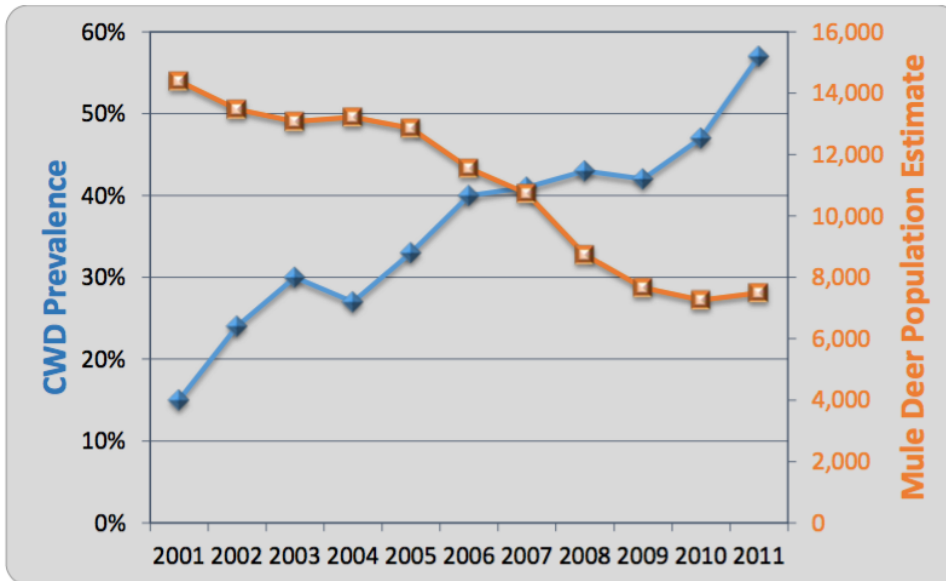
Specific percentages of testing, and rule changes related to Deer Management Permits (DMP), Trap Transport Transplant permits (TTT) and Trap Transport Process (TTP) are described in Appendix A.

### **Common questions**

#### *Is CWD a threat to Texas deer?*

CWD is an additional mortality factor in deer populations, and data indicate that mortality rates can surpass fawn survival in deer herds with high CWD prevalence. This can result in declining population trends. CWD does not have an immediate short-term impact like some other diseases such as anthrax or epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD); however, CWD may be more likely to influence long-term population dynamics.

For example, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has monitored an infected mule deer population in southeast Wyoming. In 2001, there was an estimated 14,393 mule deer and a CWD prevalence of 15%. Ten years later, the disease prevalence was 57% and the population was estimated at less than 7,500 deer.<sup>2</sup>



Trend in CWD prevalence and mule deer population in the South Converse Unit of Wyoming, 2001-2011 (published by WY Game and Fish Agency).

While CWD may not be the sole cause of the decline, research shows that CWD positive mule deer and whitetail are much more likely to die compared to their uninfected counterparts.<sup>3</sup> They become more vulnerable to other mortality factors including predation, hunter harvest, and vehicle collisions. Three unrelated studies on CWD positive whitetail, mule deer, and elk indicate declining survival rates, and suggest harvesting female cervids may be an unsustainable management practice.<sup>4</sup>

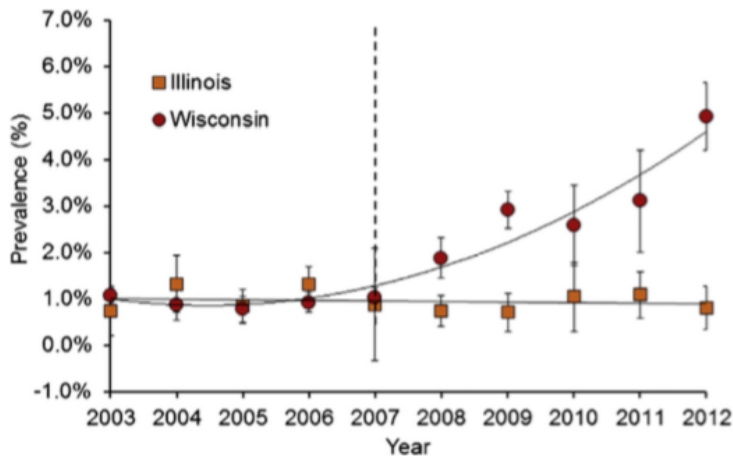
Closer to home, researchers at Texas A&M Kingsville, Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute recently conducted a population modeling exercise to simulate the introduction of CWD into a white-tailed deer population in a semi-arid environment. The manuscript for this work is currently being peer-reviewed at the journal PLOS ONE. This modeling exercise utilized long-term datasets from South Texas deer populations, and CWD prevalence rates occurring in Wisconsin. Though the results are preliminary, the model predicted a 65 percent decrease in population size for an unharvested south Texas population within 50 years after introduction of CWD. The model predicted a 67 percent decrease with a harvest of 1-7 percent of the males in a population with CWD, and an 89 percent decrease with the addition of 1-6 percent harvest of females. The semi-arid south Texas climate results in low and variable fawn survival, which means that adult survival must be high to maintain the population. The additional adult mortality from CWD would result in a population decline even in the absence of harvest. Furthermore, the male age structure of the population would decline, leaving fewer adult males (>4.5 years old) available for harvest.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Can CWD be contained or controlled?*

Once CWD becomes established in a free-ranging deer population, it is very unlikely that it can be eradicated. However, CWD can be contained in a specific area or within a breeding facility simply by stopping the movement of deer from these infected populations.

Early detection is critical for disease containment. Obviously, the earlier the disease is detected, the sooner risks for transmission can be minimized.

Illinois implemented a strategic harvest strategy in 2002, and has successfully maintained a constant prevalence of ~1%. Wisconsin began a similar approach in 2002 but discontinued their efforts in 2007 in response to strong opposition. CWD prevalence in Wisconsin has increased more than 5X since relaxing its response strategy.



Annual chronic wasting disease prevalence in Illinois and Wisconsin (Manjerovic et al. 2013).

#### *What is the probability of detecting CWD under different testing regimes?*

Conventional post-mortem testing regimes have a very low probability of detecting the disease in any one year. The probability of detecting CWD increases through time if the population has been “closed” for several years, and 100% of eligible mortalities have been tested. This forms the basis of the voluntary Texas Animal Health Commission Herd Certification Program which requires 100% testing over a five year period. In Texas, CWD has been discovered only in deer breeding facilities that tested more than 90% of eligible mortalities.

Most states with CWD require 100% mortality testing in the breeding facilities, and 100% mortality testing after release into a shooting preserve (see Appendix B).

Modeling efforts have demonstrated that low testing rates have a very low probability of detecting the disease, even in a closed system.

Breeding Facility Post-Mortem Eligible Mortality Testing	Testing of Released Breeder Bucks	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
100%	100%	24	43	57	71	79
100%	50%	21	36	49	62	69
100%	0	17	31	40	53	62
80%	100%	23	40	54	67	77
80%	50%	16	32	44	57	68
80%	0%	15	26	35	47	57

*The probability of detecting CWD utilizing a combination of post-mortem testing rates.*

*Could the new CWD rules negatively affect deer breeders?*

All other things being equal, a release site customer would prefer to receive deer from a TC1 facility, whether the motivation is “safer” deer, or not wanting to conduct CWD testing, or both. As per the proposed rules, TC2 and TC3 breeders may “test up” to TC1 status through a live animal test regime over a period of time. Deer breeders who elect not to work toward TC1 status may have a more difficult time in the marketplace.

*Are free range deer be tested at the same rate as breeder deer?*

Although there is no requirement for individuals to collect and submit samples from free-ranging populations of deer, Texas hunters and landowners contributed 8,000 CWD samples during the 2015-2016 hunting season. Another 2,000 samples were collected from road-killed deer.

Disease vectors are compressed when animals are in confined areas, and the transportation of deer greatly increases the risk of inadvertently spreading CWD to new areas. For approximately a decade, TPWD has required some levels of CWD testing at all deer breeding facilities and Trap, Transport, Transplant (TTT) sites. Under current and proposed rules, those who do not wish to move deer by TTT permit are not required to test, and deer breeders who do not wish to move deer are not required to test.

Historically, deer breeders tested released deer at about a 70% lower rate compared to testing of deer moved and released via TTT permits. The percentage increased in 2015- 2016 with the adoption of the emergency and interim CWD rules, but still remains lower than TTT permits (17% to 23%).

*How many deer breeding facilities are connected to the first CWD-positive facility?*

During the epidemiological investigation of the first CWD-positive in a breeding facility, TPWD determined that over 75% of deer breeders in Texas were linked to this CWD-positive facility by no more than 3 degrees of separation.

## Appendix A

### Overview of May 26, 2016 CWD Rule Proposal with Amendments

#### **Deer Breeder CWD Rules**

##### **Period 1 (effective date of rule – May 15, 2017)**

1. Beginning April 1, 2017, a deer breeding facility must have tested 80% of the eligible mortalities in the previous report year to be movement qualified (MQ).
2. In order to qualify for no release site testing (TC1) facility must:
  - a. Have Certified or “5<sup>th</sup>-Year” status in TAHC Herd Certification Program
  - b. Have tested at least 80% of eligible mortalities over the previous five years
  - c. Have ante-mortem tested 50% of herd by May 15, 2017. Note: By ante-mortem testing a minimum of 25%, a facility may temporarily attain TC1 status. In order to maintain TC1 status after May 15, 2017, the facility must supply the remainder of ante-mortem samples to reach the 50% testing level.
3. Facilities that are not TC3 (CWD trace herds), and not TC1, will be classified as TC2 and release site testing will be required at associated (Class II) release sites.
4. After May 15, 2017, the only pathway to TC1 status will be via 2.a. and 2.b. above.

##### **Period 2 (10/2016 –02/28/2019)**

1. All TC1 and TC2 facilities must continue to test 80% of eligible mortalities annually.
2. All TC2 release sites (Class II) must CWD-test the first 15 deer harvested per season through the end of the 2018/2019 hunting season.

##### **Period 3 (03/1/2019 and on)**

1. All deer breeding facilities are either MQ, not movement qualified (NMQ) or TC3
2. MQ facilities must test 80% of eligible mortalities.
3. NMQ facilities have not tested 80% of eligible mortalities annually.
4. There will be no release site testing for any facilities, except for non-compliant sites as indicated below under Release Site Provisions.

#### **TC3 or CWD Trace Facilities**

1. Irrespective of the time periods described above, CWD trace facilities (TC3) will be required to test 100% of eligible mortalities in the pen, and 100% of hunter harvested deer at Class III release sites.
2. All deer released on Class III release sites must be tagged with a RFID or NUES tag.

### **Transition Provisions**

1. 2015/2016 Class II Release Sites will be reset back to Class I if they complied with testing and reporting requirements.
2. 2016/2017 Class II Release Sites that are in compliance with CWD testing requirements will be reset back to Class I if all TC2 facilities that contributed deer during 2016/2017 “test up” to TC1 status by May 15, 2017.
3. 2016/2017 Class II Release Sites will be reset back to Class I if all the breeder deer liberated prior to the 2016/2017 hunting season are harvested and CWD tested.

### **Release Site Provisions**

1. A harvest log must be maintained on site and each deer harvested must be entered in the log the day of harvest – Applies to Class II and Class III release sites, TTT release sites, and DMP sites that receive TC2 deer.
2. All breeder deer release sites must be high-fenced (7 ft.) and the landowner must ensure all deer remain on the release site.
3. Failure to comply with release site testing requirements will result in release site testing requirements carrying forward until testing requirements are fulfilled.
4. Failure to comply with release site testing requirements will make the release site ineligible to receive a DMP permit or additional deer until testing compliance has been fully achieved in subsequent years.
5. Liberated deer must have access to the entire acreage listed on the release site registration form, except that deer may be excluded from areas for safety reasons (i.e., airstrips) or for the purpose of protecting crops, orchards, ornamental plants, lawns, etc.

### **Other Breeder Deer Provisions**

1. Each herd that has been permitted for at least 6 months on March 31 must provide a minimum number of CWD test results annually, irrespective of whether there are mortalities. The minimum number of post-mortem tests is equal to 4% of the herd. Ante-mortem tests may be substituted as provided for in 2. and 3. below.
2. A deer breeder may substitute ante-mortem tests for required post-mortem tests on a 2:1 basis to meet testing requirements provided that post-mortem tests have been submitted for at least 50% of eligible mortalities, or if no mortalities have occurred.
3. A deer breeder may substitute ante-mortem tests for required post-mortem tests on a 4:1 basis to meet testing requirements if post-mortem tests have been submitted for less than 50% of eligible mortalities.
4. Ante-mortem tests must be conducted on animals at least 16 months of age
5. An individual deer may be ante-mortem tested no more frequently than every two years
6. There is no residency requirement for an animal to qualify for ante-mortem testing.



7. If a facility receives deer from a facility of lower status, the receiving facility must stay downgraded for 2 years. TC1 is the highest status and TC3 is the lowest status

#### **Deer Management Permit (DMP)**

1. If a DMP breeding pen receives deer from a TC2 facility or Class II Release Site, the DMP release site must CWD test the first 15 hunter harvested deer each season through the 2018/2019 hunting season.
2. TC3 deer may not be transferred to a DMP facility.
3. Class 3 release sites may not conduct DMP activities.

#### **Trap, Transport, Transplant permit (TTT)**

1. Prior to issuance of a TTT permit, all TTT trap sites must provide 15 valid post-mortem CWD samples collected after the Saturday nearest September 30. Exception: TTT trap sites in urban areas may utilize samples collected and tested between April 1 and the time of application.
2. TTT release sites will be required to test the first 15 deer in the harvest each year through the 2018/2019 hunting season.
3. No TTT trapping from any breeder deer release sites.

#### **Trap, Transport, Process permit (TTP)**

1. TTP Permittees must supply 15 CWD samples at the end of the season.
2. CWD samples must be provided on 100% of deer taken by TTP on Class III release sites.

## Appendix B

State	Can release deer from breeding pens?	Testing Requirements on "Hunting Preserves"	Testing Requirements in Breeding Pens
Colorado	Not outside of permitted breeding facility. "Shooting preserves" may not include public resource deer. <b><u>*Not Licensing new operations.</u></b>	100% of eligible (12 mos) mortalities	100% of eligible mortalities
Wyoming	No; one grandfathered facility can release only within their high fence	Cannot release deer from breeding pens; one facility is grandfathered.	N/A
Utah	Does not allow captive WTD or MD operations, but does permit captive elk operations. Elk may not be released into the wild; only into "hunting preserves," which may not include public resource deer.	100% of eligible (16 mos) mortalities	100% of eligible (16 mos) mortalities
New Mexico	No, not into the "wild." 2 can release onsite; only with authorization from vet; onsite only. Must attempt to run-out "wild" deer before closing the gates. Remaining deer become private property. Fence must be removed when the 'park' "goes out of business."	None, but NM considers only 1-2 of the 25 permit holders to be "breeders." The rest are just "novelty parks." No "game parks" are located near CWD zones.	None, but NM considers only 1-2 of the 25 permit holders to be "breeders." The rest are just "novelty parks." No "game parks" are located near CWD zones.
North Dakota	No. "Shooting preserves" may not include public resource deer.	100% of eligible (12 mos) mortalities	100% of eligible (12 mos) mortalities
South Dakota	No. "Shooting preserves" may not include public resource deer.	None	None
Nebraska	Per Kit Hams (402-471-5442). No deer breeding facilities allowed. There are a few elk facilities, and they are required to remove "wild" animals before closing the gate; but DNR believes this rule is not enforced by Dept. Ag.	They do not differentiate breeding facility vs. shooting facility. It's all one facility.	100% of all deaths

Kansas	No. We shoot them when they get out, after approval from livestock commissioner. Pen-raised deer into "shooting pens" where there can't be any public resource deer. LE flushes out the wild deer before gate goes up.	Voluntary CWD Program. DNR has no say in breeding program, except for shooting escapees.	Voluntary CWD Program. DNR has no say in breeding program, except for shooting escapees.
Wisconsin	No. Per Dr. Amy Horn (WDATCP, Division of Animal Health; 608-224-4886), "Hunting Preserves" may not include public resource deer; must drive-out "wild" deer before closing gates.	50% of hunter harvest (deer "intentionally killed")	100% of eligible (12/16 mos) mortalities
Illinois	No. And captive cervids may not be hunted in Illinois. Doug Dufford said there are 2 large operators who are considered grandfathered with respect to some rules, but doesn't think they are allowed to hunt captive cervids either.	N/A. Captive cervids may not be hunted in Illinois.	Any cervid dying from an unknown cause or that exhibited symptoms must be tested for CWD; any cervid exhibiting symptoms of CWD will be destroyed and tested or quarantined until it can be determined that the animal does not have CWD.
New York	No. Place deer in Commercial Shooting Operations which must be void of public resource deer. If any "wild" deer are left on tract, they become private property by definition.	10% of hunter harvest, but proposing to increase to 100% of eligible (6+ mos) mortalities	100% of eligible (6+ mos) mortalities <b>*Not Licensing new operations.</b>
West Virginia	No. "Shooting preserves" may not include public resource deer.	Must test 30 animals or 10% of the mortalities whichever is greater	100% of eligible (12+ mos) mortalities
Virginia	No. Breeding pens not allowed. Only 4 grandfathered high-fenced tracts.	N/A	Breeding pens not allowed, exhibitor facilities required to test 100% of all eligible (6+ mos) deaths.
Minnesota	No. There are a few licensed "shooting preserves" that must be void of wild deer. Deer that are fenced in must be shot under license and tested. <i>Michelle Carstensen said they have a system similar to TC1, 2, and 3. If a Level 6 breeder receives deer from a Level 4 breeder, then Level 6 is downgraded to Level 4.</i>	Must test 100% of all deaths	Must test 100% of all deaths

Maryland	Illegal to breed captive deer since 1984.	<u>*Not Licensing new operations</u> ; grandfathered ~12 facilities. No release into the "wild." Must report all deaths to DNR within 24 hrs and must test 100%.	N/A
Missouri	No. Animals can be place in licensed, high-fenced "hunting preserve" which must be void of public resource deer.	100% of hunter harvest (6+ months of age)	100% of eligible (6+ months of age) mortalities
Oklahoma	No. Can only be placed in licensed "commercial hunting area" which must be void of public resource deer.	Not yet	Not required (Dept. Ag), unless in CWD HCP.
Michigan	No captive deer are allowed to be released into the wild in Michigan. Doing so would be a felony. "Hunting Ranches" may not include public resource deer; must drive-out "wild" deer before closing gates.	25% of hunter harvest; 100% of all unknown cause of death/found dead.	100% of all unknown cause of death/found dead; If enrolled in CWD HCP, then 100% of eligible (12 mos) mortalities
Montana	No, animals that are inventoried within a game farm (Alternative Livestock facility) must remain inside the licensed facility. <u>*Not Licensing new operations (since 1999).</u>	No hunting of captive animals is allowed.	All (100%) animals that die within a facility or are slaughtered are required to be tested for CWD.
Texas	Yes, but must be high fenced site as of August 2015.	<b>Class I</b> sites: No Testing Required <b>Class II</b> sites: Test 50% of hunter harvest or 50% of the number of deer liberated that year, whichever is less. <b>Class III</b> sites: Test 100% of hunter harvest or 100% of the number of deer liberated that year, whichever is greater.	20% of eligible (12/16 mos) mortalities since May 23, 2006, and 50% of mortalities for previous 2 years (if there was at least 1 eligible mortality; otherwise 4.5% of the avg eligible-aged pop size for previous 2 years)
Iowa	No. Can release only into licensed shooting preserve (n = 9), according to Will Suchy (later Jim Coffey). "Wild" deer must be removed first, and all deer in "shooting preserve" must have dual marking. Landowner must reimburse State for estimated number of deer that are left within the preserve.	100% of hunter harvest + deer found dead in pasture	100% of eligible (12 mos) mortalities <u>NMQ unless enrolled in certified herd program</u>

## **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: CWD is not known to exist in Texas outside of the captive cervid facilities where it was discovered in July and September of 2015, and the Hueco Mountains in far West Texas in 2012. TPWD has been conducting CWD surveillance on hunter-harvested deer and roadkill deer since 2002, and more than 32,000 samples have been tested for CWD. This sampling effort provides TPWD with confidence that CWD is not in the free-ranging deer populations at a significant prevalence rate, if at all. 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. The increased sampling effort is to confirm that CWD is not present in free-ranging deer populations.

#### **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 serves as a source of income for your property. It is to your benefit to monitor for CWD each year to insure 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 eliminate the establishment of CWD in the deer population.

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

A: This is a difficult question to answer because there is not a single standardized approach to responding to a CWD positive in a free-ranging deer population. Disease management strategies to combat CWD could include efforts to eradicate CWD where practical and when circumstances warrant such a response. A more likely option would be to implement actions to limit the spread and distribution of CWD from the ranch or general area. 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.) would help determine the most appropriate response to address the CWD discovery. With either 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). The severity of the population reduction depends on whether the goal is to attempt CWD eradication, or control the spread of CWD and reduce or maintain prevalence rates. Reducing a population density to some level below 30-50 acres per deer might be appropriate to contain CWD in a limited area, reduce prevalence rates, and reduce opportunity to infect other animals. However, landowners should keep in mind that density goals for CWD management will be determined on a case by case basis depending on many factors. 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, the Texas Animal Health Commission and/or Texas Parks & Wildlife Department will contact the ranch owner and open dialogue of 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. The agencies will work in cooperation with the affected property owner to determine the best approach to contain 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 request for additional sampling to occur outside of normal hunting seasons if traditional hunting is unsuccessful at acquiring a sufficient number of samples.
  - Texas Animal Health Commission in most cases will develop a herd plan for the ranch that would provide conditions under which deer may be moved from or liberated on to the property, additional CWD sampling needs, carcass movement restrictions, and population density goals for that property or area, as well as other requirements to manage CWD.

**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
- Banning of baiting or feeding that unnaturally concentrate deer
- Adopt regulations that prevent unnatural movement of deer
- Adopt regulations concerning the movement and disposition of certain deer carcass parts
- Herd plans developed by TAHC and TPWD for CWD infected or exposed sites (breeding facilities, individual ranches)
- 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 if eradication of CWD is a viable option, but unlikely in most cases

- Sharpshooting by agency officials, with cooperation of private landowners

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

A: Eradication of CWD from a free-ranging deer population would be difficult. For eradication to be a viable option, early detection of CWD is critical and the geographic extent of the disease must be limited. Under those conditions it may be possible to eradicate CWD by significantly reducing the deer population. Some states such as New York and Minnesota have been successful in keeping CWD from getting established through eradication efforts because CWD was discovered early and deer populations were dramatically reduced in localized areas to eliminate potential spread. Those areas have been CWD free for a number of years and deer populations are returning to pre-treatment densities. In situations where there is a possibility to prevent the establishment of CWD, the best option may be to remove as many deer as possible in the disease zone. TPWD has not identified a situation where this approach to eradicate CWD from a free-ranging population was an option. When CWD was discovered in West Texas in 2012, TPWD and TAHC did not recommend any further population reduction because mule deer densities were already at low level (2-3 deer per square mile). A population reduction in the Hueco Mountains would not prevent additional animals from contracting CWD from the contaminated environment; therefore, an approach to manage CWD through regulations and education was utilized. Governing the movement of deer in and out or within that area where CWD is established, and efforts to help educate landowners, hunters, and the general public on how to reduce CWD risks were deployed. Whether TPWD would consider options to try to eliminate all deer on a ranch or within a relatively small, localized area will be handled case-by-case and will depend on many factors, but trying to eliminate a deer population to control or eradicate CWD is not practical in most situations.

**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 samples collected by TPWD staff. Therefore, hunters and landowners are encouraged to contact TPWD wildlife biologists to have a deer tested for CWD. A landowner or hunter collecting and submitting their own CWD samples to TVMDL are responsible for those CWD-testing expenses. Additionally, certain release sites receiving liberated breeder deer, and TTT/TTP trap sites are required to collect and submit CWD samples and pay for those lab fees.

**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 (obex) may be collected without damaging the cape or antlers. Hunters retaining the antlers are strongly encouraged to discard brain tissue or other nervous system material in a landfill or at the location of harvest (preferably buried).

**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 on the receipt. The website address is <http://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/diseases/cwd/> and is located on the receipt. Once on that web page, click on the link for CWD test results and enter the receipt number.

**Q: Can 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 lease 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 where it is known to exist.

**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 breeding facilities in Lavaca and Medina counties. The increased surveillance will provide more confidence that CWD is not present in free-ranging white-tailed deer populations. 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 season, staff will be at meat processing facilities, check stations, and other locations collecting samples. Established check station locations will be posted on the TPWD CWD web page. 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 CWD containment zone in West Texas, TPWD needs to collect and test as many samples as possible. TPWD's collection goal from free-ranging hunter-harvested deer for the 2015-16 deer season is greater than 8,000 samples. TPWD's sampling plan calls for a specific number of CWD samples from each of the 33 different white-tailed deer population monitoring units called RMUs (resource 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. That 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.

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Modeled impacts of Chronic Wasting Disease on White-tailed Deer in a Semi-Arid Environment  
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