

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE IN MONTANA-SURVEILLANCE AND EPIDEMIOLOGY UPDATE ^{TWS}

Keith Aune, Coleen O'Rourke, and Neil Anderson
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1400 South 19th Avenue, Bozeman, MT 59715

Although the first cases of Chronic Wasting Disease were diagnosed almost 40 years ago (Fort Collins, 1967) widespread concern over this disease emerged in recent years. The most significant change in the epidemiology of this disease has been the discovery of the fatal neurologic disease in captive elk raised in alternative livestock facilities. In 1996 the first cases of CWD were reported in Alternative Livestock from a facility in Saskatchewan. Subsequently since 1996 the disease has been identified in several facilities within Montana, Saskatchewan, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Colorado. It has been found in wild deer in Colorado, Wyoming and recently Saskatchewan and Nebraska. A national program to control this disease in the Alternative Livestock industry was drafted in 2000 by USDA/APHIS/Veterinary Services and recently funded by Congress. In Montana CWD surveys of wildlife have been conducted since 1998 and since 1999 in the Alternative Livestock. We tested 1367 wild cervids from 1998-2001. An additional sample from approximately 250 deer (*Odocoileus* spp.) and elk (*Cervus elaphus*) harvested in the fall of 2002 was submitted and results are pending. All wild Cervids in Montana have tested negative for this disease. One alternative livestock facility was infected with CWD in Montana and was depopulated in December 1999. The Department of Livestock initiated mandatory testing for CWD in all alternative livestock facilities following this discovery. Since 1999 the Department of Livestock has tested 1705 captive cervids slaughtered for meat markets or in shooting operations. All results to date have been negative but 132 test results recently submitted are pending. Since a rigorous testing program was implemented in 1998 no wild elk or deer have been diagnosed with CWD in Montana. Following the localized outbreak of CWD in one infected alternative livestock facility in Montana further infections have not been identified. We discuss implications of this disease to wildlife and the alternative livestock industry.