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The Wisconsin Conservation Congress District Leadership Council met May 24, 2016 to discuss the resolutions passed at this year's Spring Hearing, assigned to the Council. Among the issues we dealt with were several resolutions regarding the captive cervid industry and deer farm fencing requirements. We had a healthy and robust 3 ½ hour discussion on just that one issue and representatives from as many various stakeholders as we could identify were invited to attend and participate in the discussions. Present were representatives from the deer and elk farm industry including Rick Vojtik (farmer and president of WOW-Whitetails of Wisconsin), Laurie Seale of WOW, Bob Welch (The Welch Group), Bruce Krueger (president of the Wisconsin Deer and Elk Association), and Joel Espe (elk farm industry expert). Also present were Tom Hauge and Tami Ryan from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Dr. Paul McGraw from the Department of Ag, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP), Bryan Richards from United States Geological Survey (USGS), Mike Brust from the Wisconsin Bowhunters Association, and George Meyer and Dr. Dave Clausen on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

With the renewed interest in and growing concerns over the rate of CWD in our state's free-ranging whitetail deer herd, the timing of our Council meeting and the issues that came before us from the citizens of the state could not have been more relevant or appropriate. Just weeks earlier, at the Conservation Congress' annual convention in Manitowoc, Governor Walker announced a plan to review Chronic Wasting Disease management strategies with both DNR and DATCP and we applaud the Governor's move to assist the two departments in the review of our state's CWD management plan.

As our discussion ensued, it became clear that we have an opportunity to put forward a well thought out plan to combat CWD on all levels using current science and including all stakeholders involved in hopes of keeping CWD contained to the best of our ability.

Over the past 40 years the agriculture industry in Wisconsin has changed dramatically. Success in agriculture depends on a sound management plan in every aspect of the business. Attention to detail and recognizing threats and risks are all part of the formula for success. Biosecurity plans were started in the swine industry in response to market demands to provide pigs that were free of certain pathogens (SPF herds). Protocols were developed to prevent the introduction of certain diseases into swine premises. Biosecurity plans are now an indispensable part of the dairy, beef, swine, poultry and mink industries in Wisconsin today. These plans are designed knowing that disease is an always present threat, but there are practices that can be applied to lessen the risk of disease from entering a livestock facility. These plans look at risk levels of certain practices and what can be done to lower or contain those risks. On some hog farms, the biosecurity plans go so far as requiring anyone entering an operation to "shower-in" and "shower-out" as they come and go from the

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facility. These plans apply Best Management Practices that are science based to keep livestock healthy and profitable.

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress feels it is time to develop a science-based biosecurity plan for the wild deer population in our state. Deer hunting in Wisconsin is a \$ 2 billion industry and the animals that are the foundation of that industry must be protected from diseases that threaten their very existence. What I would like to present to you today for consideration is what we are calling a comprehensive biosecurity plan to protect Wisconsin's free ranging whitetail deer from CWD in areas of the state that we have not yet detected the disease. Today with me is Dr. Mike Riggle DVM who is a Congress delegate from Taylor County who, over the course of his career as a veterinarian, has worked with many livestock producers to develop biosecurity plans for their operations.

I will now turn it over to Dr. Riggle to offer a few suggestions of what the Conservation Congress would like to see become part of a comprehensive biosecurity plan.

**(Mike Riggle offers our suggestions as to what we see as threats and solutions)**

I know there will always be people who want to blame someone or something for CWD showing up in Wisconsin. Did it come on a cattle trailer? Did it come from an elk or deer carcass that some hunter brought back from out west? Does it occur spontaneously? During the 1990's before CWD was detected in Wisconsin and before any of you were part of the policy setting for the DNR or department biologists realized there was a concern with the practice, the DNR sent fawns from all over the state to various rehabilitators and then sold those fawns to deer farmers for \$25. Some of those fawns could very likely have come from the CWD endemic area before CWD was detected. And perhaps their movement unknowingly assisted with the spread of this disease. We don't know because the fawns were never tracked, but at this point, it doesn't much matter. We need to look ahead to the future and the emerging science tells us about best practices to slow the spread of this disease.

There are some who would like to regulate deer farming out of business. Yet if every deer farm was shut down we would still have CWD to deal with in our free-ranging whitetail deer. We all need to stop pointing fingers at each other and work together toward the best possible outcome. It doesn't matter how CWD got here. But if we are serious about combatting CWD each one of us needs to exercise best management practices in the course of our activities that could potentially spread CWD. The WCC believes a comprehensive biosecurity plan such as what we just offered can do just that.

An excerpt from the April 2016 special CWD issue of the newsletter for the Southeastern Wildlife Disease Study College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Georgia realistically summarizes and frames the CWD issue:

*Eradicating CWD appears infeasible given its extensive distribution and other epidemiological attributes. Regardless, adaptive approaches for containing foci and reducing infection and transmission rates have shown some promise and deserve further attention. Such pursuits undoubtedly will be more difficult to champion and garner support for in sociopolitical climates ranging from apathetic to combative, particularly when control prescriptions impinge upon or conflict with commercial and sport hunting interests. We believe there are two important motivations for making progress toward sustainable containment and control strategies for CWD in*



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*the coming decades: First, data from several sources suggest that heavily-infected cervid populations will not thrive in the long-term. Second, data on CWD prions and experience with other animal prion diseases suggest minimizing human exposure to these agents is prudent.*

My final thoughts are this: while CWD may be thought of as primarily an issue affecting hunters and the captive cervid industry, it is in fact an issue that affects everyone. All the citizens of this state are “owners” of the free-ranging whitetail deer “industry” and we all need to apply BMPs if we are serious about combating CWD. We need to look to a comprehensive approach that factors in and mitigates multiple risk factors, educates the general public, and protects the health of our wild herd as well as farmed animals. The Governor has charged DATCP and DNR to work together to review current CWD strategies. What better way to start those discussions than to have Secretary Stepp bring this pragmatic approach of a comprehensive biosecurity plan to the table when she meets with DATCP Sec. Ben Bransen.

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Mike Riggle, DVM

## Threats / Risks Associated with CWD

1. Baiting and feeding. Risk level -High  
Risk for spread of CWD, TB and other contagious diseases. ( site Michigan research during TB outbreak.  
Possible solutions a. Ban politically difficult. b. Require bait to be spread over an area no less than 100sq ft (10x10).Bait must not be spread in same spot to prevent repeated contamination. May help to reduce build up of pathogens in small area.
2. Captive Cervid Facilities with POS CWD test.  
Risk Level -High nose to nose through fence  
Shooting pens that are going to continue to operate must be required to double fence within 6 months of pos test. Fence inspections done every 6 months at owner's expense. Must landfill any carcasses and all gut piles. Pos test on breeding facility. From the time pos is found owner must inspect fences daily and any escapes between discovery of pos and depopulation will negatively impact indemnity paid. Or significant fines will be levied for escapes if indemnity cannot be touched.
3. Captive Cervid Facilities with no known pos
  - a. Enrolled in CWD Program
  - b. Certified CWD free
  - c. Not enrolled in cwd program  
All are low risk but fence inspection needs to be more than every 10 years
4. Vectors and Fomites (fomites are inanimate objects that can carry a disease vectors are other animals or insects that can carry a disease)
  - a. contaminated soil from core areas. Risk high public awareness campaign needed. Model after aquatic invasive species program.

Hunting boots and atv's can carry substantial amount of contaminated soil. Risk level -high

- b. Carcass movement high risk in pos areas
  - c. Scavengers. Risk med in pos areas
  - d. Uptake by plants needs more research public awareness for captive cervid farmers. Assume med risk until proven different
  - e. Urine based scents. Dept has a good informational piece that needs better publicity. Canadian provinces have banned the use not the sale. Med risk . If sanctions are applied industry will be forced to test or develop synthetic products.
5. Fence maintenance after depopulation. 6 year USDA program after depopulation. Fence inspection should be increased ie 6 month intervals at owner's expense. Risk varies on degree of contamination and in or outside CWD zone.
6. Complacency by governing bodies and legislature. High Risk of losing the battle on containment geographically and possibly species infected.