

## Executive Summary

After more than eight years of chronic wasting disease (CWD) management in Wisconsin, it is increasingly clear that controlling CWD in Wisconsin's free-ranging white-tailed deer will be extremely challenging and will require a substantial commitment of human and financial resources over an extended period of time. Disease management in free-ranging wildlife populations generally is difficult, expensive, and controversial, particularly when significant wildlife population reduction is a part of the plan. Conclusive control or eradication of CWD in a high-density, free-ranging, white-tailed deer population is unprecedented. Despite a difficult task, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is dedicated to limiting the spread of chronic wasting disease across the state. All available evidence indicates that CWD has the potential for significant, negative impacts on the future of deer hunting in Wisconsin. We are therefore establishing the following goal for the management of CWD over the next 15 years:

**Minimize the area of Wisconsin where CWD occurs and the number of infected deer in the state.**

To achieve this goal, it is imperative that the DNR has public support for and active participation in this plan.

Deer hunting is enjoyed by nearly 700,000 hunters in the state, providing nearly 7 million days of hunting recreation, and generating nearly \$1.4 billion in total impact to the state's economy each year. Because of the special significance of deer to the Ojibwe people, CWD also poses a real threat to these tribes and their tribal culture. Deer and deer hunting are an extremely important part of Wisconsin's heritage and culture.

The DNR has the public trust responsibility for managing wildlife and ensuring the health of wildlife populations in the state. There are real health risks to deer and elk from CWD and ongoing questions about possible health risks to humans and livestock. Additionally, there are secondary risks to the state's economy, socio-cultural traditions, and ecosystem from the long-term effects of the disease.

The currently identified geographic distribution of CWD is substantially larger than was known in 2002 and is likely increasing. Eliminating CWD from Wisconsin using the tools currently available is unlikely given the difficulty in managing CWD in free-ranging deer, magnitude of deer reductions required to significantly affect the disease, and declining legislative support. However, there is still a need to take steps to effectively manage CWD regardless of the continued challenges. It is imperative that Wisconsin actively manage CWD so that we are in the best position possible should new, more acceptable and effective tools be developed.



*CWD positive 3-year old doe showing clinical signs of the disease before being shot by a DNR warden in Columbia County, August, 2006.*



Therefore, minimizing the area of the state where the disease occurs is the responsible goal to pursue. This goal does indicate a shift in our original management approach by currently accepting an area of CWD infection in southern Wisconsin, and at the same time, focusing CWD control efforts on limiting CWD to that area of the state while simultaneously controlling its intensity and distribution.

Advances in understanding of the ecology and epidemiology of CWD in Wisconsin have contributed significantly to informing our management actions. Yet, to date, there is no clear prescription for managing CWD. The DNR will need to continue intensive monitoring of CWD prevalence and distribution in order to make decisions on CWD management using an adaptive management and response approach. We believe that the results of our ongoing monitoring of CWD in the state's wild deer along with advances from research into the epidemiology of the disease over the next 15 years will allow the state to better evaluate the effectiveness of actions on controlling CWD.

### **Key Objectives**

**The key objectives of this response plan are to**

- ◆ Prevent new introductions of CWD in areas where disease is not currently believed to be present
- ◆ Monitor for and respond to new areas of CWD infection (new foci)
- ◆ Minimize geographic distribution and intensity of CWD
- ◆ Increase public recognition and understanding of CWD risks and participation in disease control efforts
- ◆ Address the needs of our customers
- ◆ Enhance the scientific information about CWD

**The plan includes a number of specific management and monitoring actions that will be taken in order to achieve the overall goal and the individual objectives established. These actions include**

- ◆ Implement the current (2009) hunting season structure as the basic season structure for all units in the CWD Management Zone through 2015 with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing season structure in reducing deer populations after the 2015 and 2020 season.
- ◆ Issue post-season landowner hunting permits in the CWD Management Zone.
- ◆ Provide hunters with opportunities to have their deer tested for CWD.
- ◆ Cooperate with community organizations, food pantries, and meat processors in the CWD Management Zone to provide hunters options for donating deer.
- ◆ Pursue a statewide ban on the feeding and baiting of deer to reduce the risk of transmission of CWD and other serious cervid diseases into new areas.
- ◆ Continue statewide surveillance in areas where disease is not known to exist using new approaches to detection surveillance that balance efficiency and efficacy.
- ◆ Support and encourage the proper disposal of deer carcasses from areas inside and outside of Wisconsin where CWD has been detected to minimize disease transmission risk.
- ◆ Work jointly with DATCP to reduce the number of escapes from cervid farms and to expeditiously depopulate, secure, and decontaminate cervid farms containing CWD-positive animals.

- ◆ Continue to work with DATCP to access federal and state funding for CWD management.
- ◆ Use survey data to better understand public opinions about CWD management and utilize a professional communications firm to develop, test, and refine messages and delivery mechanisms that enhance public knowledge and support for CWD management.
- ◆ Continue to cooperate with the Department of Health Services to maintain the registry of persons known to have consumed venison from CWD positive deer.

- ◆ Support and cooperate with researchers to better assess the risks that CWD may pose to humans and livestock, including farmed cervids.
- ◆ Continue to seek new funding to support management-oriented research on CWD.
- ◆ Monitor CWD prevalence and disease patterns in the known affected area to gain knowledge about disease trends to support adaptive management.
- ◆ Conduct sharpshooting on public lands and private lands where permission can be obtained, focused in areas of newer infections along the periphery of the known CWD distribution for the purpose of controlling the geographic spread of the disease.
- ◆ Cooperate with Indian tribes to develop action plans for the management of CWD on reservation lands or ceded territories.



*University of Wisconsin researcher uses telemetry equipment to locate a radio-collared deer in the CWD zone.*

The goal, specific objectives, and management actions established for addressing CWD were developed based on the best scientific and socio-cultural information currently available. As new information becomes available, and we continue to monitor and evaluate progress in managing CWD, steps will be taken to adapt our management and response approaches and actions. This adaptive response strategy is essential because the understanding of both CWD epidemiology and the efficacy of CWD management techniques in free-ranging populations is still developing. Nonetheless, any adaptive measures taken will only be effective if the DNR, hunters, landowners, and other key stakeholders work together to implement these measures in an effort to reach common goals.