



Most animals infected with CWD look healthy until the final stages of the disease. They can still infect other animals despite a lack of visible signs. Testing harvested and salvaged deer, elk, and moose is critical for disease management. Photo courtesy of Donald Campbell.

For more information on chronic wasting disease go to wdfw.wa.gov/cwd or scan the QR code.



Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is in Washington!

An outbreak of CWD in Washington could severely impact our deer and elk populations, which could in turn impact hunting opportunities, economies that rely on hunting revenue, and ultimately ecosystem health and resilience.

What is CWD?

CWD is a fatal neurologic disease of cervids- deer, elk, moose, and caribou. It is caused by infectious proteins called prions that are transmitted from animal to animal or indirectly through environments. There is no cure for CWD. It can only be confirmed through testing of an animal after death.

Health and Human Safety

CWD has not been shown to infect people, but research is still ongoing, and it is not known for certain if people can get infected with this disease. While CWD has not been associated with human disease, there is a theoretical risk to people who eat an infected animal. As a precaution, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that people do not eat any animal that tests positive for CWD or appears to have CWD. WDFW and DOH also advise hunters to:

- Avoid harvesting any animal that appears sick or behaves strangely.
- Wear eye protection and disposable gloves while field dressing game.
- Thoroughly wash hands and equipment after processing carcasses.
- Minimize handling parts where the CWD prions accumulate including brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, pancreas, tonsils, and lymph nodes.
- Avoid cutting through bone, brain, or spinal cord.
- Disinfect processing tools by soaking in household bleach (>2% free chlorine) at a 40% solution (with water) for a minimum of 5 minutes. Remove any tissue pieces from tools before soaking and rinse tools after soaking.
- Safely discard inedible parts and any positive meat using one of the recommended methods listed on the WDFW website. Tissues from CWD-positive animals can contaminate the environment and infect other cervids. Do not dispose of infected materials on the landscape or feed to pets.

How can you help with disease management?

With CWD confirmed in Washington, testing harvested and salvaged deer, elk, and moose is critical to track disease. For information on how to have your deer, elk, or moose tested, scan the QR code below or go to wdfw.wa.gov/cwd. Check the website for information on how to properly transport and dispose of inedible parts. If you are notified by another state or provincial fish and wildlife agency that the animal you have harvested has tested positive for CWD, you have 24 hours to notify WDFW. WDFW will assist with disposal of any meat or parts not consumed. If you see sick, injured, or dead animals, please report it at wdfw.wa.gov/sickwildlife.