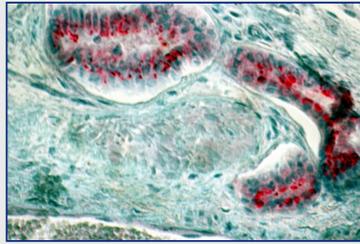


Chronic Wasting Disease: General Information



Prion accumulation. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jan Novakofski, USAC.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease of deer, elk, and moose. It belongs to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), which attack the central nervous system and cause small holes to form in the brains of infected animals. Other diseases in this family include scrapie (sheep), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (cattle), and Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease (humans).



Above: Captive elk with CWD. Photo credit: Dr. Terry Kretzer, Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.

In the later stages of the disease, deer will show signs of progressive weight loss, listlessness, excessive salivation and urination, increased water intake, and loss of coordination. Many of these signs could also be caused by a variety of other illnesses or injuries.

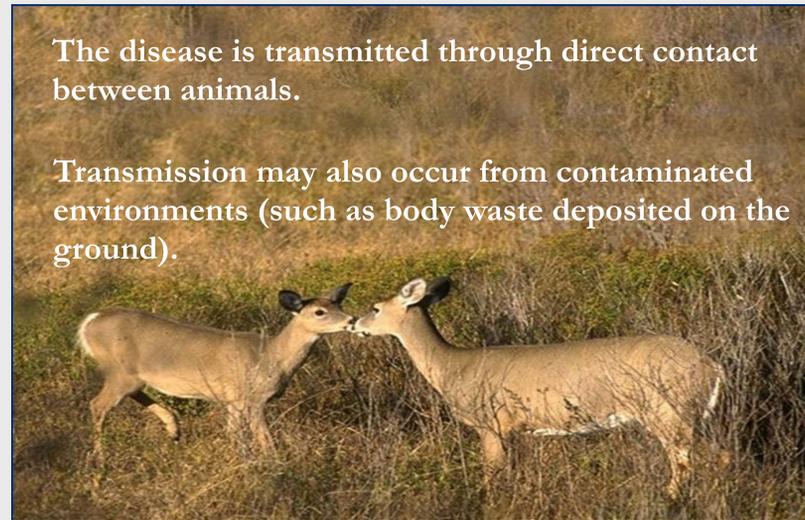


These animals show clinical signs of CWD, but 94% of the deer from Illinois that have tested positive for CWD have appeared healthy.

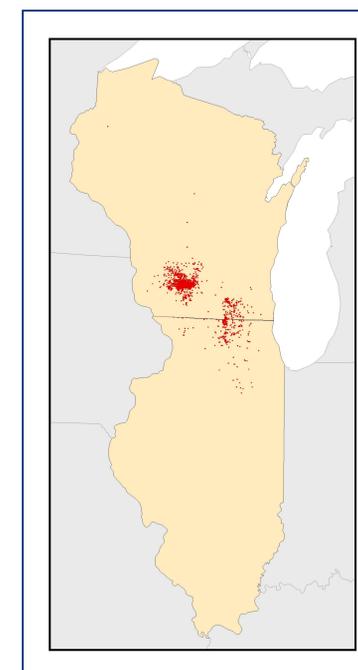
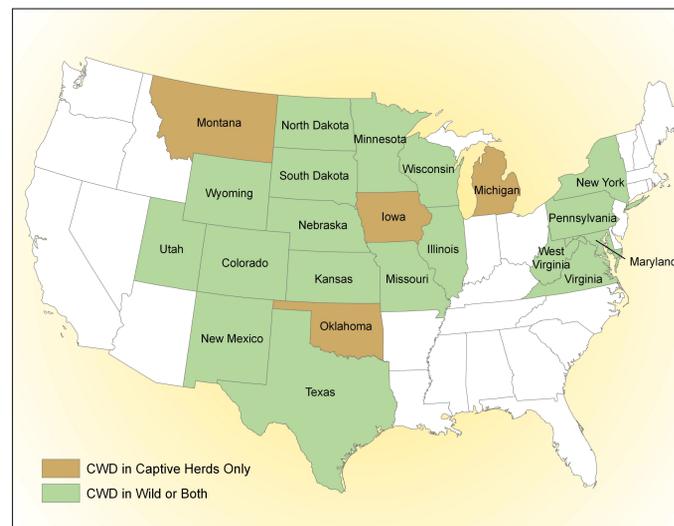
Chronic Wasting Disease is not caused by a bacteria or virus, but by a “prion” – an infectious protein. There is no known treatment or cure – the disease is always fatal. When a deer becomes infected, it may be a year or longer before signs of illness become apparent. However, once clinical signs appear, death normally occurs within a few weeks to months.

The disease is transmitted through direct contact between animals.

Transmission may also occur from contaminated environments (such as body waste deposited on the ground).



CWD was originally limited to a small area of northeastern Colorado, southeastern Wyoming, and southwestern Nebraska. However, CWD is now found in several states within the U.S. The disease occurs in wild cervid populations in Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Kansas, Minnesota, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, North and South Dakota, New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. In addition, CWD has been found in captive herds in Montana, Oklahoma, Iowa and Michigan.



This map shows the location of CWD-positive deer in Wisconsin and Illinois. The shared disease outbreak requires communication and cooperation between the two states. Collaboration in data sharing and scientific research are an integral component in the effort to control the disease.



State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Natural Resources

