



VENISON AND CWD What Hunters Should Know



Based on five years of testing, an average of 1.6% of deer from the two Disease Eradication Zones (DEZs) and 0.1% of deer from the Herd Reduction Zone (HRZ) tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). However, in the western DEZ's core area, disease prevalence is 5% in adult does and 10% in adult bucks. The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS), the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) want you to have the following information.

- ◆ CWD is a fatal disease that affects the nervous system of deer, elk, and moose. It has never been known to affect any other species of animal under natural conditions. The disease is caused by an abnormal protein called a prion, which can survive cooking temperatures. Prions concentrate in certain tissues, such as brain, spinal cord, lymph nodes, and spleen, although they may also be present in low concentrations in muscle tissue.
- ◆ CWD has never been shown to cause illness in humans. However in Europe, a similar disease of cattle called Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE) (also known as "mad cow disease") is the cause of a fatal nervous system disease in some humans who have eaten tissues from infected cattle. Because we know that, at least in this one instance, an animal prion disease has been able to infect humans, no one can predict with absolute certainty that CWD will never cause human disease.
- ◆ The World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control agree that there is currently no scientific evidence proving that CWD can cause disease in humans. However, in the interest of safety, these organizations advise that people not consume the meat from deer or elk which are known to be positive for CWD.

***** In keeping with this recommendation, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health recommends that venison from deer harvested inside the CWD Disease Eradication Zones or the Herd Reduction Zone should not be consumed or distributed to others until CWD test results on the source deer are known to be negative. *****

Although the CWD test may not detect animals in the very early stages of infection, and therefore cannot absolutely guarantee that a negative deer is prion free, it is currently the best available way to tell if an individual deer is infected. Venison from multiple deer should be kept separate and labeled before freezing, so that you will know which deer was the source of the meat.

- ◆ Because the CWD prions concentrate in nervous system tissue like brain and spinal cord, and in tissues like the eyes, spleen, and lymph nodes, boning-out venison to avoid these tissues is advised. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection has more information on their internet site regarding deer processing at: http://datcp.state.wi.us/ah/agriculture/animals/disease/chronic/pdf/venison_safety_2side.pdf.

Basic butchering guidelines include the following:

- Wear rubber or latex gloves.
- Remove all internal organs and minimize contact with those parts and all central nervous system tissue.
- Do not use household knives and utensils; use equipment solely dedicated to venison preparation.
- Do not cut through bones.
- Bone out lean venison and remove all non-muscle tissue.
- Clean residue from knives and other equipment and then disinfect with a 50/50 solution of household bleach and water.
- Clearly label where all venison was harvested.
- Freeze venison and await test results from the area where the deer was harvested.

If you would like more information about CWD and its implications for human health, you can call the Wisconsin Division of Public Health at 608-267-9003 or go to the following internet site:
<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/communicable/factsheets/creutzfeldt.htm>

For more information about the Wisconsin DNR approach to controlling CWD go to the following internet site:

http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/Whealth/issues/CWD/doc/CWD_report.pdf