

CWD in Moose in Alberta Info Sheet

Wildlife Info Bulletin #8, Feb 2013



Incident

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) confirmed in a road-killed moose north of Hilda, Alberta.

Significance

- first case of CWD documented in a moose in Alberta, and in Canada
- a few documented cases of CWD in moose in Colorado and Wyoming
- CWD occurs in moose only where they overlap with infected deer
- do not anticipate many cases in moose in Alberta
- do not anticipate significant effects on moose populations

Background

The Alberta case:

- adult bull moose hit on Hwy 41
- carcass disposed of
- DNA confirmed as moose
- killed near the South Saskatchewan River valley in an area where CWD is known to occur in mule deer and white-tailed deer

Q & A

Will Alberta begin widespread surveillance of moose heads?

No. There is no evidence that CWD is maintained in moose populations. It occurs in moose only where they overlap with infected deer.

If I harvest a moose in the CWD risk area, can I submit the head for testing?

CWD spills over into moose only where the disease is well-established in deer. As such, deer remain the best tool for monitoring CWD. Game managers are currently reviewing the CWD surveillance program and will develop recommendations prior to 2013 hunting seasons.

As has always been the case with the CWD surveillance program, we will test the head of any deer, elk or moose harvested legally in Alberta.

What do other jurisdictions do about moose and CWD?

Colorado and Wyoming began testing a few moose in 2005/2006. Cumulatively, approximately 1,600



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moose have been tested and less than 10 cases of CWD were found, primarily in Colorado. Other jurisdictions with CWD do not routinely test moose.

Why did Alberta test this moose?

As part of the ongoing surveillance program in the CWD risk area along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border we test any emaciated cervid or any other cervid that is opportunistically available.

In the last three years, 38 moose were submitted for CWD testing in Alberta.

Are there moose in the South Saskatchewan River valley?

According to Fish and Wildlife aerial surveys, there are stable or expanding moose populations throughout prairie and parkland habitats. It is not uncommon to see moose in the Hilda sandhills area south of Empress, Alberta.

Hunting opportunities in these areas also are steadily increasing. For further information, visit

the My Wild Alberta website and search for the Hunting Draws Summary Report.

- <http://mywildalberta.com/Default.aspx>

How do moose get CWD?

It seems most likely that infections in moose reflect environmental contamination. In areas where CWD is well established in deer, or where moose intimately share range with infected deer, prions may accumulate in the soil and thus moose could be exposed to CWD infectious material. However, there is no definitive evidence of how natural transmission to moose occurs.

Additional Information

- <http://srd.alberta.ca/FishWildlife/WildlifeDiseases/ChronicWastingDisease>
- <http://mywildalberta.com/Hunting>

For more information on wildlife diseases in Alberta, see:

- www.srd.alberta.ca/FishWildlife/WildlifeDiseases

