



**Western Governors' Association
Policy Resolution 05 -22**

June 14, 2005
Breckenridge, Colorado

Chronic Wasting Disease

A. BACKGROUND

1. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a neurological disease found in wild deer and elk herds in portions of Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Utah, southwestern South Dakota, New Mexico, and Saskatchewan. Confirmed cases of CWD in wild deer populations east of the Mississippi River have also been found in Wisconsin, Illinois, and recently as far east as New York State. CWD has also been found in captive deer and/or elk in ten states and two Canadian provinces.
2. CWD belongs to a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE). The disease is a transmissible disease of the nervous system resulting in distinctive lesions in the brain causing the animal to become emaciated, display abnormal behavior, lose bodily functions and die. Within this group of diseases there are three predominant variants which affect animals: scrapie in sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle (sometime referred to as Mad Cow Disease) and CWD in deer and elk. This disease is a prion disease. The infective agents are extremely resistant to most means of disinfection and may remain viable for a long period of time i.e. years.
3. According to federal and state epidemiological research, no human has ever contracted CWD or any other related neurological disease from deer or elk. Ongoing studies designed specifically to determine chronic wasting disease's ability to cross species boundaries indicate that it is very difficult to infect species other than deer or elk with the disease.
4. Research on various aspects of TSE diseases is currently being undertaken around the world. Research is focusing on how CWD is passed from animal to animal as well as the apparent species barrier that prevents or makes it difficult for the disease to be transmitted from animals to humans. In addition, researchers are aggressively pursuing the development of methods that will enable early detection of CWD in live animals. A rapid reliable and affordable live animal-screening test is needed to test animals in captive game operations as well as wild deer and elk. A means of rapid determination for hunter-killed animals is also needed.
5. Confirmed outbreaks of the disease in both captive and wild cervid populations in North America suggest that the CWD is a potential threat to wild and captive cervids and

should be addressed systematically by local, state and federal agencies. The potential impact to wildlife and agriculture is inestimable.

6. Notwithstanding the lack of absolute information regarding CWD, management efforts are being undertaken, in a scientific manner, throughout the United States and Canada. Where the disease is known to exist, most states are engaging in coordinated management activities designed to reduce deer densities. When new outbreaks of the disease have been confirmed, several states and provinces have responded with intensive depopulation in the newly infected areas. In addition, entire captive herds are usually depopulated when any animal tests positive within the herd.

B. GOVERNORS' POLICY STATEMENT

1. The Governors urge Congress to fund research and monitoring efforts, especially a national educational effort focused on disseminating factual information to assist states or individuals facing positive CWD test results. Since the threat to interstate commerce created by CWD is so big, the Governors strongly support federal assistance in dealing with this disease. Although federal assistance is needed, the Western Governors recognize states' primary role in managing wildlife. Agricultural and other rural economies throughout the Western states will be severely impacted if CWD is not effectively managed. Financial assistance to monitor the spread of the disease and to aggressively pursue appropriate research is necessary. The Governors urge Congress to establish an emergency fund that will enable USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to provide timely assistance to states should there be a CWD outbreak.
2. States should continue to work together to develop a regional approach to managing CWD in North America. The recent expansion of CWD into previously uninfected areas underscores the need for a comprehensive regional approach to effectively managing CWD. Whether through a memorandum of understanding or other agreements, it is imperative that the efforts undertaken by each state are consistent with efforts in adjacent states.
3. The Governors encourage states at risk to develop contingency plans for managing CWD in areas where new outbreaks are confirmed, e.g. outside the endemic area. Once CWD has been confirmed, encourage the development of area specific management plans based on regional plans. The scientific community is working diligently toward a better understanding of CWD, its methods of transmission and other aspects of the disease. If there is any possibility of eliminating the disease in areas outside the endemic area, it is imperative that each state have contingency and/or management plans for addressing the disease in the event that an outbreak is discovered.
4. The Governors support cooperation (or development of cooperative term agreements) among appropriate state agencies to a regional approach for CWD management. Since

CWD poses a threat to both captive and wild populations of deer and elk, state wildlife agencies and state departments of agriculture must work cooperatively to effectively manage CWD.

5. Pursue strategies to contain CWD within existing established endemic areas and aggressively work to reduce the prevalence of the disease within such areas. The goal of such efforts should be to reduce prevalence to as close to zero as possible.
6. Request that USDA develop model interstate movement requirements for domesticated cervid animals.

C. GOVERNORS' MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. The Western Governors' Association (WGA) shall post this resolution to its Web site to be referred to and transmitted as necessary.
2. WGA shall continue to monitor this issue and report to the Governors as necessary.

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