

Ask the Expert

Chronic Wasting Disease and the Hunter

Question: With the increased publicity and incidence of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), what should hunters know?

Answer: Hunters should take some special precautions if they are concerned about CWD. First, read carefully the information from the respective state or provincial wildlife agency. States and provinces are actively working to provide the most up-to-date information possible. They will provide written information, but due to the amount of on-going research, agency websites will provide the latest information.

The precautions hunters should take with animals from CWD areas are common sense. How do hunters get the best-tasting meat, while protecting themselves from CWD and other diseases? Good game care—period!

1. Hunters should always take care of their meat in a sanitary manner. This means keeping the meat cool, clean and dry. BUT, also wear rubber gloves and try to keep from unnecessarily cutting any internal organs or tissues, i.e., brain and spinal column.
2. Epidemiologists with the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and epidemiologists at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have studied chronic wasting disease and have found no link between it and any neurological disease that affects humans. Health officials, however, advise hunters not to consume meat from animals known to be infected with the disease.
3. In CWD areas, hunters should have meat tested. (In Colorado, testing is mandatory and paid for by the State in the endemic area. In other areas of the state, testing is voluntary and runs about \$25.) Check out your state or provincial web sites for state specific testing information.
4. In addition, it is suggested hunters take these simple precautions, listed below, when field dressing deer or elk taken in areas where the disease is endemic.
 - Do not shoot, handle or consume any animal that appears sick.
 - If you notice your animal has disease symptoms, upon killing it, notify your wildlife agency.
 - Avoid head and spine shots to prevent potential contamination of the meat.
 - Wear rubber gloves when field dressing carcasses.
 - Bone out the meat from your animal.
 - Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
 - Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing is completed.
 - Do not consume brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out a

carcass will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes.)

- Avoid consuming the meat from any animal that tests positive for the disease.
 - Request that your animal be processed individually, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your animal.
5. Some states, like Colorado, have established regulations addressing the transport of deer and elk out of CWD areas. Generally, states that have adopted carcass transportation regulations do not allow the importation of any brain or spinal column tissue and allow transport of only the following:
- Meat that is cut and wrapped (either commercially or privately).
 - Quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached.
 - Meat that has been boned out.
 - Hides with no heads attached.
 - Clean (no meat or tissue attached) skull plates with antlers attached.
 - Antlers with no meat or tissue attached.
 - Upper canine teeth, also known as "buglers," "whistlers," or "ivories."
 - Finished taxidermy.

A special Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance website has been established at www.cwd-info.org