



State of Utah

Department of Natural Resources

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Division of Wildlife Resources

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Dear Big Game Processor,

We would like to provide you with some information on chronic wasting disease (CWD) and answer questions that you might have about processing animals from areas where CWD has been found in Utah.

CWD is a disease that has been found in deer and/or elk in 9 states in North America (including Utah) and the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. CWD has not yet been found in elk in Utah. The disease in deer and elk is believed to be caused by abnormally shaped proteins called prions. Health officials from the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization have found no evidence that CWD in deer or elk affects humans. But, as a precaution, people are advised not to eat the meat from sick animals and not to eat the brain, nervous tissue or lymph glands from any animal.

There are several prion diseases that are similar to CWD, including scrapie of domestic sheep and goats, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) commonly referred to as "Mad Cow Disease" in cattle. British researchers have linked BSE to a variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, an extremely rare but fatal disease in humans.

The incubation period for CWD is variable and depends on many things. The disease can last at least 18-24 months in deer and 24-36 months in elk. Outward signs of CWD do not appear until the animal is in the final stages of the disease known as the clinical stage. Typically, when an animal reaches the clinical stage death occurs within a few weeks. A variety of symptoms can be observed which include frequent urination, excessive salivation, and a thin or poor body condition. Prior to reaching the clinical stage of the disease an animal may show no outward signs of CWD.

Exactly how CWD is passed between animals is not known. The prions that cause the disease are believed to persist in the environment for several years. It is believed that direct contact or the exchange of bodily fluids between infected and non-infected animals plays a roll in transmission of CWD.

To date CWD has been found in mule deer only in three areas within Utah: Manti (Unit 16) near Fountain Green, Vernal (Unit 9) near Diamond Mountain, and the La Sal Mountains (Unit 13) near Moab. CWD has not yet been found in elk in Utah.

The prevalence rates for CWD within Utah are quite low: 1 positive deer was found on the Manti unit and 4 positive deer on the Vernal unit with a prevalence rate of less than 1%. The other 13 positive deer were found on the La Sal mountains where the prevalence rate is near 2%.

Public health officials and other wildlife agencies offer the following recommendations to anyone who handles deer or elk killed in areas where CWD occurs:

- Do not handle or consume any animal that appears sick;
- Wear rubber gloves when field dressing and processing carcasses;
- Bone out the meat from animals. Except when removing the head for testing or taxidermy, refrain from cutting through the backbone, spinal column or other bones.
- Wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing or processing is completed. It is recommended that tools be cleaned with soap and water or a 50% bleach solution if desired.
- Process each animal individually; do not mix the meat of different animals together.
- Avoid handling or consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, pancreas, and lymph nodes and
- Processing wastes from animals killed in the infected units should be disposed of at landfills approved to accept animal carcasses.

CWD has not been proved to be spread through the transportation of infected deer or elk carcasses. However, as a precaution, the UDWR has limited the transport of carcasses taken from positive areas in other states. Only the following parts may be imported into our state from positive areas in other states:

- ❖ 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 ivories, whistlers, or buglers
- ❖ Finished taxidermy heads.

For a list of states and areas affected by this law, see our website at <http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/hunting/biggame/cwd/>.

Each year the UDWR continues to test a sample of hunter-killed deer and elk from known infected units. Also, other areas of the state are sampled on a rotating basis to look for the spread of the disease. If an animal does test positive for CWD, the UDWR will contact the hunter by telephone. If the hunter chooses to surrender the meat and the antlers they are provided with a free permit of the same type the following year. In addition, if the hunter had the meat commercially processed and

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can provide a valid receipt the meat processing fees will be reimbursed to the hunter.

If you have further questions regarding CWD please visit our website at <http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/hunting/biggame/cwd/> or the website for the CWD Alliance at <http://www.cwd-info.org/> or call the main office for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources at (801) 538-4700. For questions regarding regulations that may impact meat processing please contact the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food at (801) 538-7117 or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (202) 720-3897. Also included in this mailing are frequently asked questions about CWD and a general CWD information brochure put out by our agency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James F. Karpowitz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

James F. Karpowitz
Division Director

JK/lm