

December 9, 2005

First case of CWD found in wild deer killed by hunter in Alberta

Edmonton... Alberta has recorded its first case of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in a wild deer killed by a hunter in the province. This brings the total to four cases of CWD confirmed in wild deer in Alberta. The federal Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirmed this latest case December 9.

The hunter-killed mule deer was harvested in Township 21 Range 1 W4, about 15 km south of Empress during the regular hunting season in wildlife management unit (WMU) 150, along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Alberta recently established three quota hunts to enlist hunters to help limit the potential spread of CWD. Quota hunts continue until December 20, but are only one of a number of actions the province is taking to combat the disease.

Alberta made a commitment to contact all those hunters who submit deer heads for CWD testing along with their contact information. These hunters are notified whether deer samples test positive or negative for the disease.

Alberta's first case of CWD in wild deer was found in September about 30 kilometres southeast of Oyen, near the Saskatchewan border. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development staff, with the co-operation of landowners and residents, then collected a total of 162 wild deer in the same area in September and October and found two additional infected deer. Alberta will continue to use various methods to reduce deer populations in areas where the disease is found. The province considers CWD to be a serious threat to wild deer populations.

Chronic wasting disease is a nervous system disease; infected animals cannot maintain weight and slowly waste away. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that CWD can affect humans. As a precaution, the World Health Organization advises against allowing products from animals known to be infected with any prion disease into the human food system. There are over 80 known cases of CWD in wild deer in Saskatchewan.