

# COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY

## **TITLE: CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE**

Effective Date: November 20, 2015

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in statewide approaches for chronic wasting disease monitoring and control.

### **II. AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. § 33-1-104 (1) “The commission is responsible for all wildlife management, for licensing requirements, and for the promulgation of rules, regulations, and orders concerning wildlife programs.”

### **III. POLICY STATEMENT**

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a naturally-occurring prion disease of deer, elk and moose. CWD has been endemic in free-ranging cervid populations in north central Colorado and elsewhere since at least the early 1980s.

Chronic wasting disease is likely an additive source of mortality in affected deer populations, but the extent of harm depends on the extent of infection. Therefore, monitoring and controlling CWD in deer and elk populations are worthwhile objectives even though eradication of CWD in Colorado is not a realistic goal. The Commission encourages the Division to develop a system for tracking CWD trends in priority affected deer and elk populations and incorporating these data into population models so long-term impacts can be better understood. The Division should also consider pursuing adaptive management experiments to develop and evaluate management actions intended to reduce prevalence or prevent increases in distribution or prevalence. Where applicable, management actions to address CWD should be included in appropriate Data Analysis Unit (DAU) plans where CWD occurs, and these should be reviewed and revised as part of the regular DAU planning process. Wherever feasible, the Division should use hunting to achieve CWD management goals and deemphasize agency culling.

The risk of CWD spread via transport of carcasses appears small, especially when compared to the risk of introduction via the natural or human-assisted movement of living, infected animals. Thus, carcass transport and disposal safeguards should not be so onerous that they impede hunter participation in affected units. Education on proper disposal of deer and elk carcasses should be the primary strategy to minimize risks for spreading CWD via carcasses.

At this time there is no evidence that CWD poses a risk to human health. However, the Division should continue to ensure that current information relative to CWD is available to all prospective Colorado hunters. As currently operated, the Division's carcass testing service primarily serves to allow individual hunters to minimize the risk of consuming an infected animal. Although data from voluntary testing submissions may have some information and management value, more rigorous surveillance should be undertaken when monitoring trends or estimating prevalence is the primary goal. When the Division requires that hunter-killed animals be submitted for testing, the Division should pay for these tests. In situations where CWD testing serves primarily as a customer service, strategies for reducing or recovering full costs and/or privatizing this program should be pursued.

The Commission recognizes the Division's ability to impact CWD is primarily limited by statutory authority to wild ungulate populations and specific commercial facilities. Because the Division shares statutory and regulatory responsibility for managing captive cervids with the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), continued cooperation between the two agencies is required to comprehensively manage CWD in Colorado. In particular, the Division should maintain regulations governing the movement and management of captive cervids in order to minimize further spread of CWD.