



# Libby Chronic Wasting Disease Detection

## Incident Command Team Update

June 26, 2019

### Incident Summary

Two cases of chronic wasting disease have been detected in the city of Libby, Montana.

#### *The First Case:*

An adult female white-tailed doe dispatched inside the city limits. The doe was emaciated and of extremely old age. CWD samples collected for testing and submitted to the Veterinary Diagnostic Lab at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. The carcass was placed in Lincoln County's Class II Landfill. FWP was notified May 29 that it was suspected to be positive for CWD. It was confirmed positive a week later.

#### *The Second Case:*

An adult white-tailed buck was euthanized in city limits near the area of the first positive deer. The deer appeared symptomatic of CWD (emaciated, difficulty standing). FWP was notified June 14 the sample tested positive for CWD, and it was confirmed June 19. A sample was also collected from a third deer two miles outside of town. It was showing similar symptoms but tested negative for CWD.

As of June 25, samples from 20 deer (18 white-tailed and two mule deer) in and around Libby have been submitted for CWD testing. Of those, 10 were collected from road-killed deer.

### Incident Response Plan

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' Incident Command Team, composed of FWP managers and staff from Kalispell, Libby, Helena and Bozeman, is responding to the detection. This team is working in close collaboration with the City of Libby, Lincoln County Sheriff's Office and other agencies. FWP and the City of Libby are developing a management strategy.

Following the guidelines in the Montana CWD Management Plan, FWP works to keep prevalence low where CWD exists and prevent its spread by increasing harvest where possible, targeted removal in areas around detections, and minimizing large groupings of deer.

CWD has been in Montana since at least 2017 but this is the first detection west of the Continental Divide in the wild. This is also unique because the detections are inside city limits.

The next step in addressing CWD in and around Libby is to determine the geographic distribution and prevalence (i.e. percent of the herd infected). FWP is working with the City of Libby and the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office to sample in and around town, as well as within a larger Initial Response Area (IRA), a roughly 10-mile radius around the detection sites.

There are no good tests for live animals, so FWP is sampling harvested deer. Samples are being collected from deer that appear sick or symptomatic, as well as road-killed deer. FWP has set up a hotline for reported sightings of deer that may need to be removed and sampled.

Sampling within the IRA will eventually be done through a combination of public hunting outside of town and possibly agency removal of deer within the city limits. To accurately determine disease prevalence and distribution, FWP will sample at least 200 deer within the IRA and an additional 200 deer in the urban center of Libby.

### **Background**

CWD is a slow-moving, fatal disease affecting the nervous system of mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk and moose. If left unmanaged, a large percentage of a herd can become infected, causing significant population declines in the decades to come. There is no known vaccine or cure.

There is no known transmission of CWD to humans or other animals, including pets or livestock. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that hunters harvesting a deer, elk, or moose from an area where CWD is known to be present have their animal tested prior to eating the meat, and to not consume the meat if the animal tests positive.

CWD prions are found throughout bodily tissues and secretions and are shed into the environment before and after death. When other animals encounter the prions, either from infected animals (contacting saliva/feces) or from contaminated environments (eating grass on infected soil), they can be infected. FWP has worked to educate residents about dumping carcasses at proper landfills to avoid releasing CWD into the ground.

For more information about Montana's response to CWD, visit [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov).

### **Public Outreach**

Every resident and/or landowner within 20 miles of Libby received a letter about the detection as well as FWP's probable management actions moving forward.

Bi-weekly public meetings are being organized to provide updates throughout summer and fall.

FWP staff have presented information on CWD and the Libby detections at the following venues:

**June 3:** Meeting with city, county and state leaders in Libby and the Libby City Council.

**June 5:** Libby Transparency in Government meeting.

**June 11:** Public meeting in Libby featuring more than 100 people occurred at City Hall.

**June 26:** Lincoln County Commission meeting

# HELP PREVENT



# CWD

**Chronic  
Wasting  
Disease**

# STOP DUMPING CARCASSES!



Once an animal with CWD dies, **any part** of the carcass can transmit the disease for **at least two years**. Safely dispose of all animal parts like you would household garbage, and you'll be helping to keep local herds "clean" of CWD and following the law. For more information, go to: [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov)



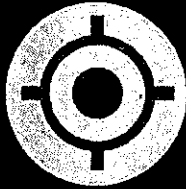
**MONTANA FISH,  
WILDLIFE & PARKS**

Report unlawful dumping to local  
game warden: 1-800-TIP-MONT



**United States  
Forest Service**

# Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)



## HUNTING

There is no evidence hunters can be infected from handling infected animals, but precautions should be taken when dressing out deer carcasses.



## LIVESTOCK

There is no evidence CWD can be naturally transmitted to pets or livestock and subsequently to humans.



## RANGE LAND

CWD prions are spread either animal-to-animal, or through soil and plants contaminated with urine or feces of infected animals.

## What risks exist to human health?

There is no evidence that CWD causes disease in humans, however, some other animal prions can cause human disease. Human prion disease rates in Colorado and Wyoming are lower than the national average despite having CWD present in the deer and elk population for over 50 years. Other transmissible spongiform encephalopathy such as "Mad Cow Disease," have been shown to cause variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease from foodborne exposure, so it is not recommended to consume meat from CWD infected animals.



## Guidelines for Patients who Consume Game

CWD prions accumulate in the brain, eyes, spinal cord, lymph nodes, tonsils and spleen of infected animals, so these tissues should not be consumed from deer or elk. Animals that test positive should not be consumed at all. Hunters should take the following precautions:

- Do not shoot or eat any animal that appears sick.
- Wear protective gloves when field dressing carcasses.
- Bone out the meat, and avoid cutting through the brain or spinal cord, and minimize handling of nervous tissues.



# CWD MANAGEMENT





# CWD MANAGEMENT

## Chronic Wasting Disease Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. What is Chronic Wasting Disease and how do deer, elk and moose catch it?**

**A.** CWD is an always-fatal neurologic disease that affects the deer family – deer, elk, moose and caribou. It is caused by a mis-shaped common protein called a prion; it is not a virus or bacteria and there is no cure or vaccine. It is in the same family of diseases as mad cow disease but CWD is specific to the deer family and does not affect other species. There is no known case of CWD affecting humans, pets or livestock. However, we do know that buck deer are two to three times more likely to be infected than does.

Although diseased prions tend to concentrate in the brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes, they are found throughout the body and can be spread through urine, feces, mucus and into the soil from a dead animal carcass. Probably the most common form of disease transmission is live animal-to-animal contact. When other animals come in contact with the prions they can be infected. Although the disease is always fatal it is slow-acting. The time from infection to death is usually about one and a half years. For most of that time the animal looks completely healthy. Only in the last month does it get very skinny and sick or “wasted” looking, hence the name Chronic Wasting Disease. The standard test for CWD examines the retropharyngeal lymph nodes or brainstem. Unfortunately, there are no good tests for live animals.

### **Q. Where is CWD in Montana and will it impact our deer and elk herds?**

**A.** As of June 2019 CWD has been found in Carbon, Liberty, Hill, Blaine, Phillips, Valley, Daniels, Sheridan, and Lincoln Counties. Although it can take decades for CWD to infect enough animals to affect a population, it can have serious impacts. A heavily-infected mule deer herd in Colorado declined by 45% over 20 years. In Wyoming a heavily infected mule deer population declined 21% *every year* and a population of whitetails declined 10% each year. Clearly, if left unchecked, CWD could have a huge impact.

### **Q. What is Montana doing about CWD?**

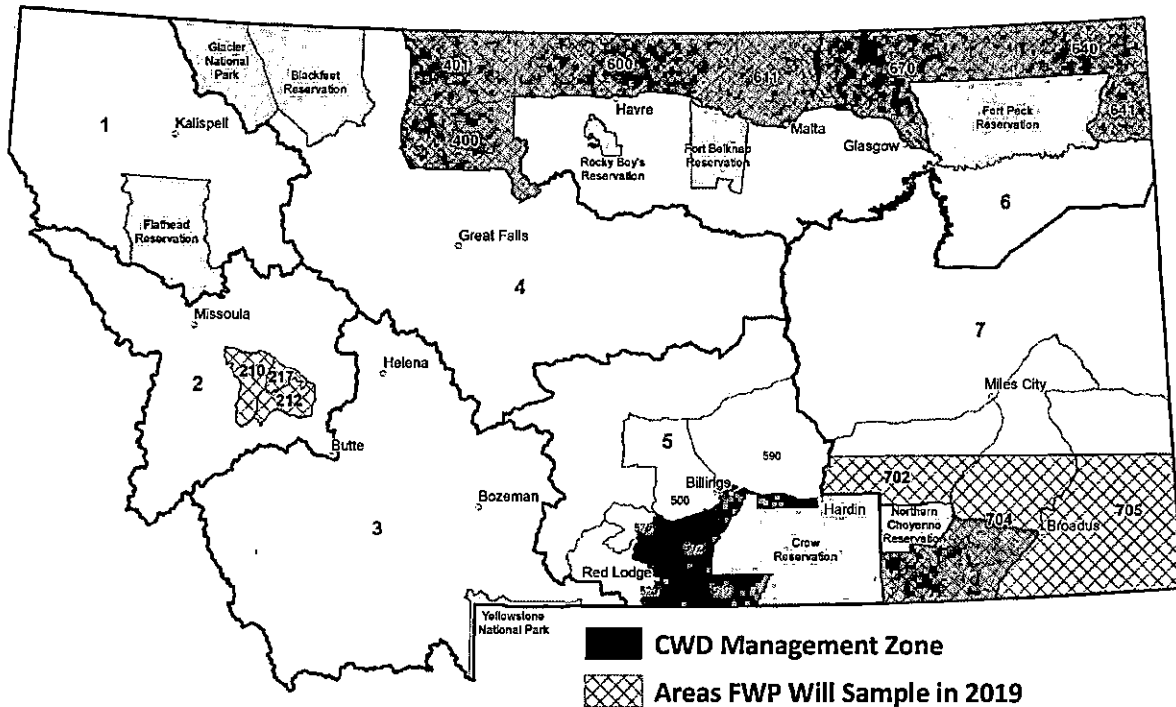
**A.** Following the *Montana CWD Management Plan*, FWP continues to look for new infections, and where CWD exists we are working to keep prevalence low and prevent its spread by doing things like increasing harvest, especially of bucks since they are most likely to be infected and spread it, targeted removal in local areas around detections, and minimizing large groupings of deer by hazing and fencing or removing attractants. There are also restrictions on transporting live deer, elk or moose or their carcasses from CWD-positive states, a ban on new game farms, a ban on feeding wildlife, and regulations on the use of deer and elk-based urine scents from CWD-positive states.

FWP continues to look for CWD in high-risk areas where we know it is near us in adjacent states and provinces, and we also periodically look in other areas. We know we won't be able to eradicate CWD now that it's here. FWP's goal is not eradication but to keep prevalence low and stop or slow the spread.

In areas where we knew we had CWD in 2018 we have set up CWD Management Zones. To prevent the spread of CWD the whole carcass, whole head, brain or spinal column from animals harvested in a CWD Management Zone are not allowed outside the boundaries unless the animal has tested negative for CWD. The boundaries of CWD Management Zones are drawn so hunters have access to game processors, taxidermists and landfills. The spinal column may be left at the kill site on public lands or with landowner permission on private lands.

The CWD detection in Libby is new and FWP will be setting up an area around town with the same regulations and restrictions.

## CWD Management Zones and areas where FWP will sample for 2019



**Northern Montana CWD Management Zone** – Hunting Districts 400, 401, 600, 611, 640, 641 and 670 including the communities of Shelby, Havre, Malta, Glasgow, and others on the defined boundaries.

**Southern Montana CWD Management Zone** – Hunting Districts 502 and 510, that portion of HD 520 east of Hwy 212, that portion of HD 575 north and east of Hwy 78, that portion of HD 590 south of Interstate 90, that portion of HD 704 south of Hwy 212, including the communities of Billings, Broadus, and others on the defined boundaries.

### **Carcass parts that may be taken out of the CWD Management Areas include:**

- Cut and wrapped meat or meat separated from the bone
- Hides with no heads attached
- Quarters or other parts with no spine or head attached
- Skull plates, antlers or clean skulls with no flesh or tissue

**Q: I didn't have my animal tested last year, is it safe to eat?**

A: There is no CWD test for meat so there is no way to know if the animal had CWD or not. The likelihood your deer, elk, or moose has CWD is low because the overall prevalence of CWD in Montana is low, and there is no known risk of humans contracting CWD. You may not throw out your meat because you were unable to have your animal tested for CWD; that would be a waste of game and unlawful. On future hunts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that hunters harvesting deer, elk, or moose from a CWD-positive area have their animal tested before consuming the meat.

**Q. If I have an animal tested how long will it take for me to find out if it had CWD?**

A. If your animal is sampled by FWP results will be posted online ([fwp.mt.gov/cwd](http://fwp.mt.gov/cwd)) within three weeks, but usually within 10 days. We recommend getting the results before eating meat from an animal killed in a CWD Management Zone. If your animal is positive you can dispose of the meat at a landfill and FWP may provide you with a new license for the current license year.



# CWD MANAGEMENT

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Helena, MT 59602

June 14, 2019

Dear Resident and/or Landowner:

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was recently found in a doe white-tailed deer in Libby. CWD is an always-fatal neurological disease of deer, elk, moose and caribou. It is in the same family of diseases as mad cow disease in cattle, but CWD is only known to affect members of the deer family. It is not known to affect humans, pets or livestock. If left unmanaged so that a large percentage of a deer or elk herd becomes infected, CWD could cause significant population declines in the decades to come. CWD has been in Montana since at least 2017, but this is the first time it has been found west of the Continental Divide. We at Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) are taking this very seriously. With this letter, we are informing every resident and/or landowner within 20 miles of Libby about the detection as well as FWP's probable management actions moving forward. To make sure our response is thorough and well-planned we have set up an Incident Command Team in Kalispell.

Although it is unlikely we can eradicate CWD, our management plan is to keep prevalence low and limit its spread. The next step in addressing CWD in and around Libby is to determine the geographic distribution and prevalence (i.e. percent of the herd infected) of disease in the herd by sampling deer. We will establish an area of approximately 10 miles around Libby, known as the Initial Response Area, or IRA, within which we will focus our sampling. There are no good tests for live animals, so we will be sampling harvested deer. Sampling within the IRA will be done through a combination of public hunting outside of town and possibly agency removal of deer within the city limits. To accurately determine disease prevalence, we will sample at least 200 deer, which is only a small percent of the total deer in the larger area. We will work closely with the city of Libby on where and how sampling deer in town will happen and we may begin sampling in town in late summer. Sampling outside of town will happen during hunting season and details about the size and description of the IRA, game check stations and how to get an animal sampled will be forthcoming. You may also see reference to this detection of CWD in newspapers, radio, TV, online, and other sources.

It is in the best interest of all Montanans to manage CWD, and we sincerely encourage your cooperation. For more information about CWD visit [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov) and click on *CWD Management*. For specifics about CWD in the Libby area contact Dillion Tabish, Incident Command Team Communications Officer, at phone 406-752-4564 or email [Dillon.Tabish@mt.gov](mailto:Dillon.Tabish@mt.gov).

Sincerely,

Martha Williams  
Director

[fwp.mt.gov/cwd](http://fwp.mt.gov/cwd)