

What is Chronic Wasting Disease?

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What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)?

- Fatal brain disease for cervids (deer, elk, reindeer, moose, caribou)
- Prion disease (also called Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies) similar to mad cow (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) and Creutzfeldt-Jacob disease in humans
- Always fatal however animals can be infected for years before showing symptoms
- Infected animals can transmit the disease, even if they do not exhibit symptoms.
- The latest research indicates CWD is not transmissible to people or livestock however there is still a need to be cautious related to consuming and processing CWD positive animals
- CWD has been shown to lower survival and



Juvenile white-tailed deer exhibiting symptoms of CWD.

Photo courtesy: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

reproduction rates of infected individuals which means the population is negatively impacted

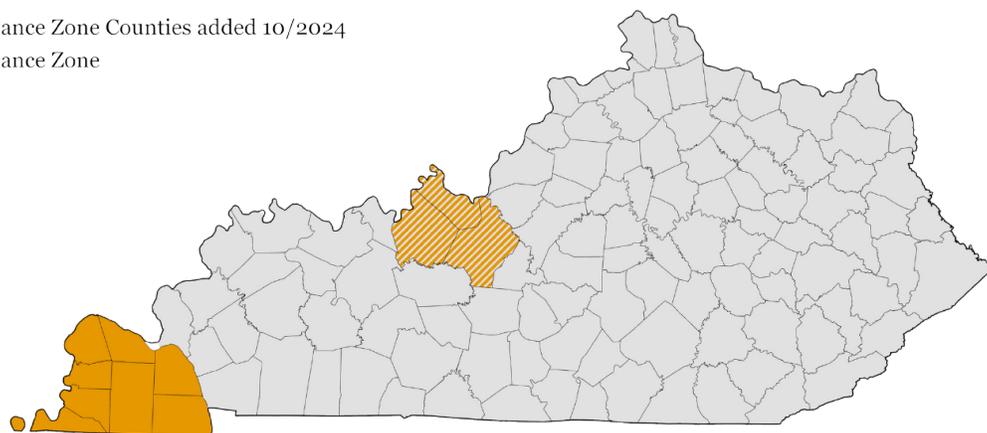
How Does CWD Spread?

- Spread by contact and sharing of fluids between individuals. Also there is some evidence that spread can occur less successfully via objects or environmental areas (soils, plants) contaminated with infectious materials (saliva, urine, carcasses of CWD-infected animals)
- Practices that concentrate individuals to very close areas are potential routes to spread CWD
- Can “jump” across the landscape (10-50 miles) due to natural dispersal movements made by juvenile infected deer
- Has made large “jumps”, multiple states and/or 1000’s of miles, due to animals being moved within the captive cervid industry or other activities
- CWD has spread is now present in more than half the states in the USA, 2 Canadian provinces, and multiple other countries since it was first found in 1967



Photo courtesy: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

 CWD Surveillance Zone Counties added 10/2024
 CWD Surveillance Zone



Where is it currently found? High risk areas in Kentucky?

- Currently CWD has been detected in one free ranging deer in Ballard County in December of 2023 and one captive deer in Breckinridge County in October of 2024
- A surveillance zone was established on Sept 13, 2021 in 5 counties (Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Marshall) in western Kentucky, this was expanded in 2024 to include Ballard, Hickman, and McCracken counties in Western Kentucky and Breckenridge, Hardin, and Meade counties in central Kentucky which are under elevated risk to detect the disease

For more CWD related publications visit: <https://forestry.ca.uky.edu/cwd>

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