

Best Management Practices to Minimize the Spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Wildlife professionals recognize the risk of continued disease spread through the movement of infected carcasses. The carcass of a CWD-positive cervids (including: elk, mule & white-tailed deer, moose, and caribou) has prions in various tissues, with a high concentration in the brain, spinal cord, lymph nodes, and tonsils. Therefore, moving a CWD-positive carcass to different geographic areas introduces the risk of further CWD transmission. As best practice, harvested cervid carcasses should not be transported across from any state, province, or territory unless all high-risk parts are removed. This still allows for importation of cut/wrapped meat, deboned meat, cleaned skulls or skull cap with no brain material, shed antlers, hides, canine teeth, and finished taxidermy mounts. All removed parts should be properly disposed of to prevent other animals from coming into contact with CWD prions. Following the best practices will reduce the risk of CWD spread:

1. Prohibit the transport of intact cervid carcasses or carcass parts across state boundaries - except boned out meat, clean hide with no head attached, clean skull plate with antlers attached, clean antlers, finished taxidermy specimens, and clean upper canine teeth.
2. Alternatives:
 - a) Allow importation of quartered carcasses with no spinal column, head, or central nervous system tissue in addition to the permitted items above.
 - b) Prohibit importation, with certain standard exceptions, of intact or whole carcasses from states that have detected CWD in captive and/or free-ranging cervids.
 - c) Prohibit importation from specific zones in states where CWD has been detected.

Carcass disposal recommendations:

Properly licensed and operated landfills offer one of the most economically feasible options for disposal of carcasses and parts, particularly in high volumes. While disposal via landfill may not eliminate infectious prion, carcass parts disposed of in a landfill would be inaccessible to cervids and may functionally contain the CWD prion. It is important that carcasses are properly covered after disposal in a landfill to prevent scavenging.

Carcass movement poses a risk for CWD introduction if unused parts from potentially infected carcasses are imported and disposed of improperly.

