

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

State sharpshooting effort effective at removing positive deer in CWD Zones

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Effort accounted for 12.5 percent of CWD-positive deer removed

MADISON – A 2007 review shows that using state sharpshooters in targeted areas within the chronic wasting disease (CWD) zones of southern Wisconsin is an efficient and effective tool in reducing deer numbers and removing diseased deer. State sharpshooters removed 987 white-tailed deer – 80 percent of which were antlerless deer – during three months of sharp shooting, according to preliminary 2007 figures released today by the state Department of Natural Resources.

Since January, 23 deer shot by agency sharpshooters tested positive for CWD. While state sharp shooting accounted for 1.7 percent of the total deer kill in the CWD Zones, that effort removed 12.5 percent of the animals that tested positive for the disease, according to Alan Crossley, DNR CWD Project Leader. Agency shooting accounts for 5 to 6 percent of the total budget dedicated toward CWD management whereas nearly 50 percent of the CWD budget goes toward testing hunter-harvested deer and surveillance.

DNR shooting focused on areas in the CWD Zones that had high disease prevalence, high deer populations and low public harvest, and areas around isolated positives. Sharp shooting took place after public hunting seasons ended.

Agency sharp shooting is supplemental and complimentary to the regular season efforts of hunters, Crossley says, but it is an important and appropriate role for DNR to use in cooperation with willing landowners.

“Public hunting is still the most important tool for controlling CWD,” Crossley said. “But of the deer killed by hunters in the CWD zones only 52 percent were antlerless, compared to the 80 percent of deer shot by DNR staff. That is not surprising in that many hunters are selective, preferring to shoot a buck if they have a chance to do so.”

In contrast, sharpshooters are not selective, shooting whatever deer come into range. If more than one deer arrives, adult does are shot first.

Wildlife managers say removing antlerless deer is key to reducing the deer population within the CWD zones, but removing older bucks is also important for disease management.

“Of adult bucks 2 years old and older in the core area, 10 percent have tested positive for CWD compared to 5 percent of the does,” Crossley said.

DNR staff only shoot deer on public lands or private property where permission was granted by the landowner. Some landowners are uncomfortable allowing public hunting on their land, but are willing to permit trained DNR staff to shoot deer on their property, according to Crossley

Agency sharpshooters are generally already experienced hunters, marksmen or law enforcement

personnel. Regardless of their level of previous training, they go through two training sessions on firearms use. Plans are developed for each property so that sharpshooters are aware of any potential hazards or unsafe shooting areas or directions.

Other facts related to DNR shooting include:

- 124 deer were shot in Devil's Lake State Park; seven deer (six in the park and one on land adjacent to it) have tested positive for CWD;
- 197 deer were shot at five state parks in southwest Wisconsin;
- 92 deer were shot at six DNR fisheries/wildlife properties in southwest Wisconsin;
- 27 deer were shot in the Kettle Moraine State Forest of southeast Wisconsin;
- Of the 987 total, 763 were shot in southwest Wisconsin and 224 deer were shot in southeast Wisconsin CWD Zones;
- deer that do not test positive for CWD are provided to landowners if they are interested, with the balance going to food pantries.

[Chronic wasting disease](#) is a fatal nervous system disease known to naturally infect white-tailed deer, mule deer, moose and elk. It belongs to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) or prion diseases.

CWD was first reported in Wisconsin in February 2002, when three deer harvested near the south-central city of Mount Horeb tested positive for the disease. To date, more than 129,000 deer have been tested statewide and CWD has been confirmed in deer from 12 southern Wisconsin counties.

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