Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a contagious neurological disease affecting deer, elk and moose. Prions are the infectious agents that cause CWD. It causes a characteristic spongy degeneration of the brains of infected animals resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions and death. Deer with CWD do not always look sick. CWD belongs to a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). Within this family of diseases, there are several other variants that affect domestic animals, including scrapie, which has been identified in domestic sheep and goats for more than 200 years, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle.

Deer can transmit CWD to each other through saliva, urine and feces. Prions are robust organisms that are difficult to destroy. They can be frozen and thawed, and still remain infectious. To date, there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in people. Animal studies suggest CWD poses a risk to some types of non-human primates like monkeys. These recent studies raise concerns that there may also be a risk to people and suggest it is important to prevent human exposure to CWD.

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**Deer Processors**

**General recommendations for deer processors:**

- Line trash receptacles with non-porous, single-use liners that can be sealed or enclosed.
- Minimize material in wastewater drains by removing and disposing of solids and other carcass debris from work surfaces, equipment, and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when handling meat.
- Bone out the meat from deer. Don’t saw through bone, and avoid cutting through the brain or spinal cord (backbone).
- Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Prompt removal of tissue from and washing of contaminated surfaces and equipment helps to prevent prions from drying and sticking to surfaces.
- Immediately clean workspaces, including washing and sanitizing instruments and other materials.
- To minimize the risk of an infected deer contaminating other deer meat, it is recommended that each deer is processed individually. If mixing of deer is a common practice for your operation, customers should be informed so they can make a decision regarding consumption.

**General recommendations for deer processors that have processed an animal that is a confirmed CWD positive in their facility:**

- Line trash receptacles with non-porous, single-use liners that can be sealed or enclosed.
- Minimize material in wastewater drains by removing and disposing of solids and other carcass debris from work surfaces, equipment, and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when handling meat.
- Properly contain carcass waste in double-lined trash bags and dispose of in acceptable landfill.
- Properly contain disposable clothing and equipment in double-lined trash bags and dispose of in landfill.
- Thoroughly wash non-disposable PPE prior to removal from contaminated site.
- Soak all appropriate processing equipment and surfaces in a 50:50 bleach water solution for at least one hour.
- Rinse all equipment and surfaces with clean, hot water after bleach water solution.
- If you are a meat processor enrolled in the Missouri Meat and Poultry Inspection Program, administered through the Missouri Department of Agriculture, and continue to use standard operating protocols for sanitization for amenable species while processing deer, no additional cleaning procedures would be necessary if a CWD positive animal was processed at your facility. To verify these requirements, go to [http://bit.ly/2hC4KKd](http://bit.ly/2hC4KKd).
### Chronic Wasting Disease (continued)

#### Hunters

**General CWD recommendations for hunters:**

- Do not handle or consume any deer that is acting abnormally or appears to be sick.
- Contact the Missouri Department of Conservation if you see or harvest a deer that appears sick.
- Wear latex or rubber gloves when field dressing your deer.
- Bone out the meat from your deer. Don’t saw through bone, and avoid cutting through the brain or spinal cord (backbone).
- Do not use household knives or other kitchen utensils for field dressing.
- Minimize the handling of brain and spinal tissues.
- Avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils and lymph nodes of harvested animals. (Normal field dressing coupled with boning out a carcass will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes.)
- In areas where CWD is known to be present, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends hunters strongly consider having their harvested deer tested before eating the meat.
- If the deer tests positive for CWD, do not eat the meat from that animal, and do not eat meat from deer that look sick or are found dead (road kill).
- To have your deer tested prior to processing, if you are inside the CWD management zone, contact your local MDC office for testing, or for those outside the zone, contact the State-Federal Cooperative Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Springfield, Mo. at (417) 895-6861 or visit [agriculture.mo.gov/animals/health/diagnostic-clabs.php](http://agriculture.mo.gov/animals/health/diagnostic-clabs.php), or the University of Missouri Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Laboratory in Columbia, Mo. at (573) 882-6811 or visit [vmdl.missouri.edu](http://vmdl.missouri.edu).
- **If you have your deer commercially processed, request that your deer is processed individually, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your deer.**

#### Questions?

For **human health questions**, contact Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at (573) 526-6700.

For **hunters with deer health questions**, contact Missouri Department of Conservation at (573) 815-7900.

For **meat processors with deer health questions**, contact Missouri Department of Agriculture at (573) 751-3377.

#### More Information

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**: [cdc.gov/prions/cwd/index.html](http://cdc.gov/prions/cwd/index.html)
- **Chronic Wasting Disease Alliance**: [cwd-info.org/index.php](http://cwd-info.org/index.php)
- **National Wildlife Health Center**: [nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/chronic_wasting_disease/index.jsp](http://nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/chronic_wasting_disease/index.jsp)
- **Missouri Department of Conservation**: [mdc.mo.gov/cwd](http://mdc.mo.gov/cwd)
- **Missouri Department of Agriculture**: [agriculture.mo.gov/animals/health/](http://agriculture.mo.gov/animals/health/)