

**Meeting Date:** January 25, 2024

**Agenda Item No.:** 11

**Agenda Item:** Chronic Wasting Disease Update

**Bureau Chief Approval:** SR

**Prepared by:** Tricia Hebdon, Assistant Wildlife Bureau Chief

**Background:**

IDFG has been monitoring for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk since 1997. Approximately 26,000 animals have been tested statewide over the last 26 years.

CWD was first detected in the state in Unit 14 in late 2021. The Commission designated a CWD management zone as Units 14 and 15, IDFG staff increased CWD surveillance efforts in and around that area, and the Commission instituted a mandatory check requirement for all deer, elk, and moose harvested in Units 14 and 15.

In the fall of 2023, CWD was detected in a mule deer buck harvested in late October in Unit 23, very near the boundary with Unit 32A. This area is summer range for migratory populations of mule deer and elk. By the time IDFG received the positive test result in mid-November, most mule deer had departed the area enroute to winter ranges in neighboring Units (mostly in Units 22, 32A and 32). The majority of general season and controlled hunts in this area were closed. Hunters in the few remaining late season elk hunts were notified and asked to submit samples for CWD testing, but emergency sample collection efforts (e.g., surveillance hunts) were not proposed because of the migration. Department staff are conducting increased roadkill surveillance along Highways 95 and 55 to collect additional CWD samples from the broader area during the winter of 2023/24.

To date, a total of 54 animals have tested positive for CWD in Idaho (44 white-tailed deer, 9 mule deer, and 1 elk). All these animals were from Unit 14, mostly around the Slate Creek drainage, with the exception of the one mule deer near the Unit 23/32A border.

In addition, 3765 CWD samples have been collected across the state during 2023, with 1,216 samples from the CWD management zone (Units 14 & 15) and 142 samples from Units 23 and 32A.

With Commission concurrence, and in accordance with the *Idaho Department of Fish and Game 2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease*, Department staff plan to again collaborate with USDA Wildlife Services to implement a control action on deer in the Slate Creek drainage and adjoining drainages during winter 2024. The objective of repeating a control action similar to last year is to maintain a reduced deer density in and around what the evidence to date suggests is the CWD focal area in Idaho to minimize disease prevalence and spread.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

Monitoring and management of chronic wasting disease is described in the *Idaho Department of Fish and Game 2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease*. The Commission may designate CWD Management Zones (IDAPA 13.01.10.150) and proclamation or emergency hunt order may designate seasons and areas in which portions of a carcass must be presented to the Department within a specified timeframe (IDAPA 13.01.08.350.03).

**Public Involvement Process:**

The Department has conducted outreach on CWD sampling efforts, CWD status, CWD surveillance hunts, and through local public meetings. Public input was solicited and

received on the proposed season changes and reporting requirements during big game season-setting in March 2022 and March 2023.

**Justification:**

This agenda item is for Commission information on the status of chronic wasting disease testing and management in Idaho.

**Staff Recommendation:**

No action requested. This agenda item is presented for Commission information.