

**Meeting Date:** November 16, 2023

**Agenda Item No. 11**

**Agenda Item:** CWD 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 and have tested approximately 26,000 animals 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 and IDFG staff increased CWD surveillance efforts in and around that area. Associated with the designation of the CWD management zone, the Commission implemented a mandatory check requirement for all deer, elk, and moose harvested in Units 14 and 15.

With Commission direction, and in accordance with the *Idaho Department of Fish and Game 2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease*, Department staff collaborated with USDA Wildlife Services to implement a control action in the Slate Creek drainage and adjoining drainages beginning on February 13, 2023. The goal of this action was to reduce deer density in and around what the evidence to date suggests is the CWD focal area, thereby reducing the risk of spread. Operations concluded on March 30, 2023. In total, 555 animals were removed and 27 tested positive for CWD.

In total to date, 49 animals have tested positive for CWD in Idaho (40 white-tailed deer, 8 mule deer, and 1 elk), all from game management unit 14 in and around the Slate Creek drainage.

In addition to the mandatory sampling of all harvested deer, elk, and moose from Units 14 and 15, the *2021 Strategy for Chronic Wasting Disease* prescribes surveillance that includes sampling animals from portions of the state that are sampled every year because they border CWD positive states and a rotating focused sampling area from the remainder of the state. Focus sampling areas rotate throughout the portion of southern Idaho not included in annual sampling, on a three-year rotation. The 2023 focus sampling area includes Units 39, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 52A, and 53.

Since the July Commission meeting, Department staff from the wildlife bureau and regions have engaged in “table-top” exercises to discuss management, sample collection, and communication responses under different scenarios of additional CWD detections in other portions of the state. These exercises are designed to streamline the response if other detections occur.

At this meeting, staff will present an update on CWD sampling from the 2023 hunting season and CWD preparedness actions happening across the state.

**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*.

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:**

None. This agenda item is for Commission information.