



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

January 2026 Commission Meeting

Agenda Item: Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Update

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Position/Title: Wildlife Health Program Coordinator

Agenda Item No.: 9

Supervisor Approval: SR

Background:

CWD is a fatal, neurological disorder of deer, elk, moose and caribou, caused by abnormally folded proteins called prions. Due to the abnormal shape of the protein, animals are unable to break down the prion in the way a normal protein would break down. As a result, build-up of the prions causes irreparable neurological damage. The disease is contagious between animals by either direct contact with infected animals or the environment. There is no known cure for the disease.

Animals infected with the prion can live for years shedding the prion in the environment before showing symptoms of the disease and eventual death. The resilient nature of prions allow them to remain on the landscape and in carcasses for long periods of time. The Department has been conducting CWD surveillance on deer and elk since 1997 and has tested over 43031 samples. The Department continues to conduct annual statewide surveillance. Surveillance and management of CWD is adaptive to changes in CWD prevalence and geographic spread. The goal is to minimize the amount and spread of CWD in Idaho to keep deer, elk and moose populations healthy.

For the current sampling year, a mandatory sampling requirement for harvested deer is in effect for Units 14, 18, 23, 24, 32A, 63A, and a portion of Unit 1 within Boundary County and east of the Selkirk Mountains crest, denoted by the red hatched areas on the map.

Mandatory sampling will assess the prevalence, or amount, of disease in these areas and the distribution or spread of the disease. Idaho also has three areas designated as CWD management zones (the areas on the map outlined in red) with carcass movement restrictions to try to limit CWD spreading to other areas of Idaho, as well as bans on the public feeding of deer, elk and moose in these areas.

In the current sampling year, the Department with the help of hunters has collected 5,422 CWD samples for testing and are closely monitoring results. There have been six detections in wild deer and elk, one in Unit 1 and five in Unit 14. The Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) has reported a CWD detection in a domestic elk that originated near Bonner's Ferry and was transported to a different domestic facility in 2025. If time permits, the update will include a short informational segment on CWD testing.

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

IDFG, under the direction of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission, is the designated authority for wildlife management in the state and is charged with the mission to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all wildlife for the public interest. Idaho code §§ 36-104(b) and 36-201 (2023), authorize the Commission to adopt rules governing the



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classification, protection, importation, transportation, possession and sale of wildlife and wildlife parts of captive and free-ranging wildlife, including disease threats like Chronic Wasting Disease (IDAPA 13.01.06, “Rules Governing the Classification and Protection of Wildlife” and 13.01.10, “Rules Governing Importation, Possession, Release, Sale, or Salvage of Wildlife”).

Public Involvement Process:

The Department has conducted outreach on CWD sampling efforts, CWD status, CWD surveillance hunts, and through local public meetings. Public will have the opportunity to comment on this topic at the Commission meeting public hearing.

Justification:

This agenda item is for Commission information on Chronic Wasting Disease and the actions the Department is taking to review and update the CWD Strategy.

Staff Recommendation:

N/A – informational only.

Suggested Motion:

N/A – informational only.