

September 2, 2005

Chronic wasting disease found in a wild deer in Alberta

Edmonton... Alberta's ongoing chronic wasting disease (CWD) surveillance effort has identified the disease in a wild mule deer about 30 kilometres southeast of Oyen, Alberta. The case was confirmed today by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

A member of the public observed a very thin deer, which was subsequently collected by a Fish and Wildlife officer from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. Before this case, there have been three cases of CWD found in game-farmed animals in Alberta, and in Saskatchewan 68 cases in wild deer and a significant number of elk found on game farms.

"This is an unfortunate finding in our wild deer population, but we are ready with a comprehensive approach to limit the spread," stated Minister David Coumts. "As we have been doing all the way along in managing for CWD, we will be working closely with other departments and agencies, as well as the public and our stakeholders, in a response to this occurrence."

Although this is a serious disease for Alberta's wild deer, and needs to be dealt with promptly, there is no known health risk for humans. Fish and Wildlife staff will meet with local residents to ensure they are fully informed while a step-by-step approach is taken to dealing with this new information. A limited collection of up to 50 deer in the immediate vicinity of the infected deer is planned for late September or early October.

Surveillance for chronic wasting disease in wild deer and elk in Alberta has been ongoing for almost 10 years, with hunter samples being submitted over the past seven hunting seasons and special collections in areas of particular concern. About 6,000 wild deer and elk from Alberta have been tested for the disease with no trace being found before this case. Alberta continues to be proactive in trying to manage CWD and is working with other provinces and the federal government to develop a national chronic wasting disease strategy and action plan.

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For further information visit website at

<http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/diseases/CWD/index.html>

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