

February 17, 2006

## **Four more cases of CWD found in wild deer in Alberta**

Alberta taking aggressive approach to prevent the further spread of CWD in wild deer

Edmonton... Following disease control efforts in January and February 2006, Alberta documented another four cases of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in wild deer in the province. This brings the total to eight cases of CWD confirmed in wild deer in Alberta since the first case in September 2005. The federal Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirmed the province's latest findings on February 16 and 17.

"Alberta considers chronic wasting disease a serious environmental and economic threat and will continue to take swift and immediate action to prevent further spread," said David Coutts, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. "We will modify and enhance our management programs as new information on the disease is made available."

The latest cases were discovered as a result of disease control actions that removed 837 wild deer in the vicinity of Empress and Acadia Valley. The program began in late January in southeast Alberta near the locations where four wild deer were found with CWD in late 2005. Alberta's first case of CWD in wild deer was found in September 2005 about 30 kilometres southeast of Oyen, near the Saskatchewan border.

The disease control actions being taken are based on recommendations of an International Expert Scientific Panel on CWD and guided by Canada's National CWD Control Strategy. Local deer culls to eliminate new areas of infection and population reduction in high-risk areas are the recommended actions to control and prevent the spread of the disease.

Chronic wasting disease is a nervous system disease; infected animals cannot maintain weight and slowly waste away. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that CWD can affect humans. As a precaution, however, the World Health Organization advises against allowing products from animals known to be infected with any prion disease into the human food system. There have been over 100 reported cases of CWD in wild deer in Saskatchewan.

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### **Map attached**

### **For further information visit website at**

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

### **Media enquiries may be directed to:**

Dave Ealey  
Communications  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development  
Edmonton  
Ph. (780) 427-8636

Dr. Margo Pybus  
Fish and Wildlife Division  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development  
Edmonton  
(780) 427-3462

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

# Backgrounder

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