

September 15, 2006

Alberta hunters asked to assist with CWD control efforts

Edmonton... The Alberta government is asking deer hunters for their help in reducing the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in wild deer in the province. Beginning this season, hunters are required to submit the heads of all deer harvested in key areas along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border and to voluntarily submit them in others. Additional deer licences are available in specific locations to help reduce deer populations.

As part of Alberta's CWD management efforts, the province will test all deer harvested in wildlife management units 150, 151, 234, 256 and 500 for the presence of the disease. The data will provide critical information about the distribution of the disease along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Hunters are asked for their co-operation with the new mandatory requirement to submit the heads of deer taken in these areas.

To detect potential spread of the disease beyond these key areas, hunters are also encouraged to voluntarily submit the heads of deer harvested in wildlife management units 144, 148, 152, 162, 200, 202, 203, 232, 236 and 238. Hunters will be notified of test results within six weeks.

To reduce deer densities in known risk areas, increased deer hunting opportunities are available within portions of wildlife management units 150, 151 and 234. CWD quota licences for all interested resident hunters are being made available through the Hunting Draws process for undersubscribed special licences. In addition, area landowners or their immediate family can apply for these licences through local Fish and Wildlife offices of Alberta Sustainable Resource Development - similar to existing landowner licence approvals.

Three tags are issued with each CWD quota licence. The first two tags are valid for two antlerless deer (either mule deer or white-tailed deer). The third tag can be used for any deer, but is not valid until the heads from the first two deer have been submitted to a Fish and Wildlife office. Licences cost \$9 plus GST.

CWD is a fatal neurological disease of deer and elk. Ongoing surveillance of wild deer and elk in Alberta began in 1998. Until the first case was discovered in a wild deer in Alberta in September 2005, more than 6,000 wild deer and elk samples had tested negative for the presence of the disease. To date, there are 13 confirmed cases in wild deer, only one of which was shot by a recreational hunter. Current data indicate CWD is limited to a small geographic area along the Alberta-Saskatchewan border near Empress.

For more information about Alberta's CWD control and surveillance efforts, visit

www.srd.gov.ab.ca/fw/diseases/index.html or contact your local Fish and Wildlife office.

- 30 -

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