

April 5, 2007

Expanded chronic wasting disease testing discovers three more cases

Results include Alberta's first case in white-tailed deer

Edmonton... As a result of the provincial wildlife disease response program, three more wild deer in the Empress area of Alberta have been confirmed positive for chronic wasting disease. The additional testing was required for high-risk, disease-control areas due to the detection of several earlier cases of chronic wasting disease.

From March 5 to 9, a total of 169 mule deer and 280 white-tailed deer was collected from high-risk areas in the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan river valleys near Empress. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency confirmed two mule deer and one white-tailed deer were positive for chronic wasting disease. This brings the total positive wild deer in Alberta to 20 cases since the first documented case in September 2005. This total may increase when testing is completed for the additional 1,401 deer collected in the Chauvin region.

Surveillance for the disease largely involves testing of hunter-killed deer in disease control areas during the fall hunting season. During the 2006-2007 hunting season, 3,000 deer and elk were tested, and four mule deer tested positive for chronic wasting disease. These positive cases led to this additional provincial disease control response in the Chauvin and Empress areas.

Chronic wasting disease is a nervous system disease where infected animals cannot maintain weight and slowly waste away. There is no scientific evidence to suggest the disease can affect humans. As a precaution, the World Health Organization advises against allowing products from animals known to be infected with any prion disease such as chronic wasting disease and BSE, into the human food system.

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Backgrounder:

Map of positive chronic wasting disease cases in wild deer

Media enquiries may be directed to:

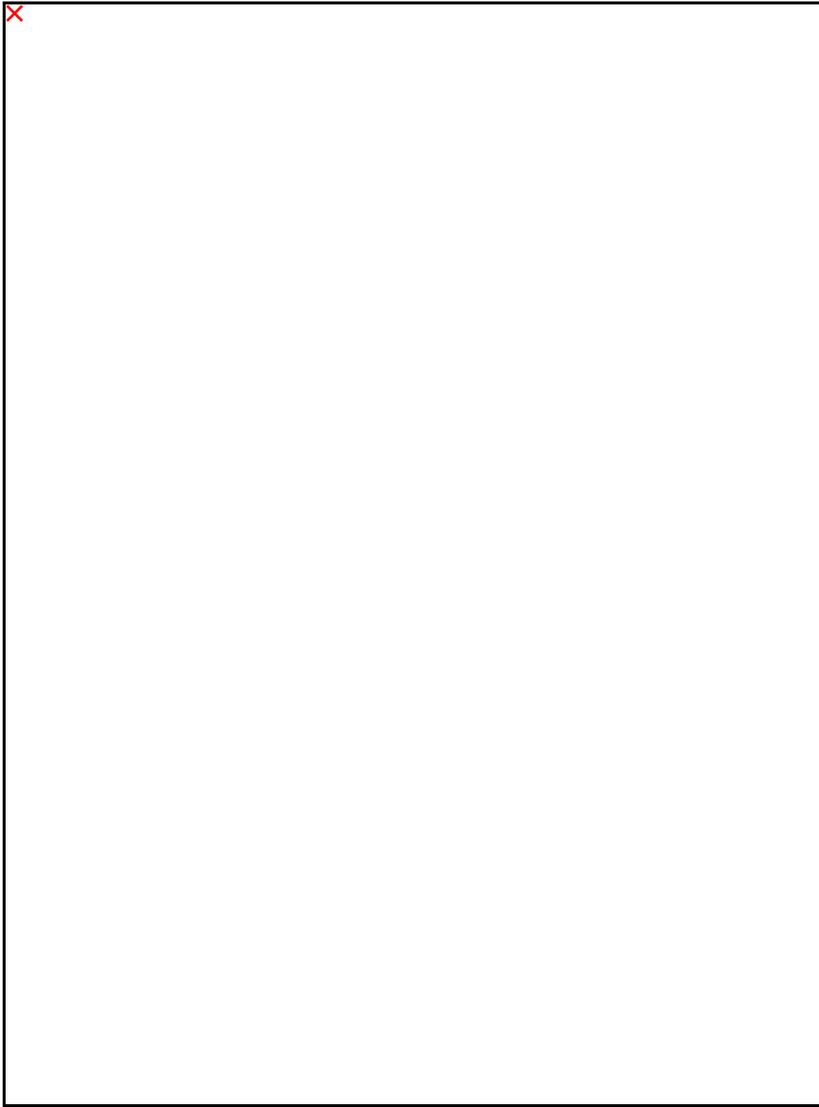
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