

May 8, 2007

Testing completed for chronic wasting disease winter program

Nine more cases found in Alberta's wild deer

Edmonton... Alberta's chronic wasting disease control program has identified nine additional infected deer out of more than 1,400 collected from the final winter target area in east-central Alberta.

Between March 15 and 27, 600 mule deer and 801 white-tailed deer were collected from high-risk areas east of Wainwright, near Edgerton and Chauvin. The disease was confirmed in eight mule deer and one white-tailed deer. These new cases are in addition to the three positive deer confirmed near the Empress area from 449 deer collected earlier in March. This brings the total of positive cases of chronic wasting disease in wild deer to 29 since the first documented case in September 2005.

Because Edgerton is the most westerly point at which the disease has been found, reduction of deer populations near Edgerton is an important control measure. With the Canadian Forces Base and the Wainwright Dunes Ecological Reserve in close proximity, large numbers of deer and elk are at risk if the disease becomes established.

Surveillance for this 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 were tested, and four mule deer tested positive. These positive cases led to the additional disease control response this winter. Staff from Sustainable Resource Development worked with the department of Agriculture and Food to test the wild deer.

Chronic wasting disease affects the nervous system, causing infected animals to lose 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 (abnormal protein) 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 map

Media enquiries may be directed to:

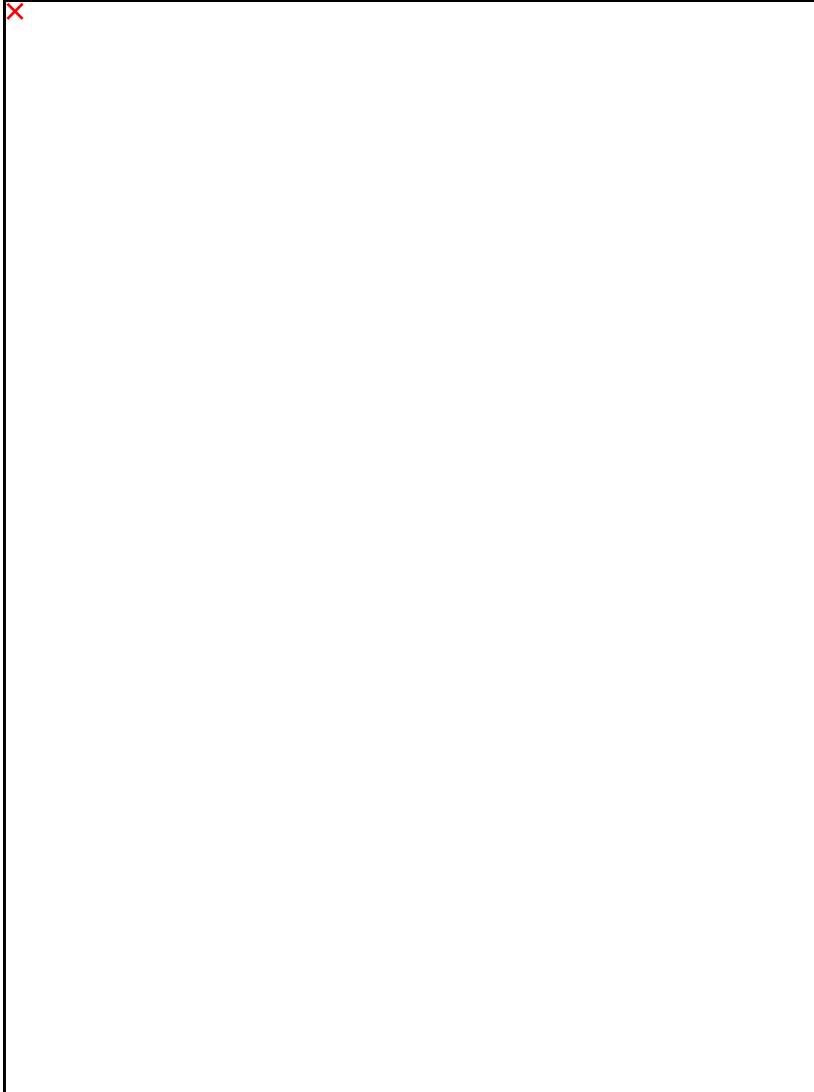
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To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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