

March 20, 2009

Eight new cases of chronic wasting disease detected in wild deer

Hunters play key role in disease surveillance

Edmonton... Alberta has completed testing deer heads submitted by hunters as part of 2008 fall surveillance for chronic wasting disease. A total of eight (7 mule deer, 1 white-tailed deer) new cases of chronic wasting disease were identified among the 4,347 heads tested since September 1, 2008. Seven were hunter-harvested deer and one was a road-kill deer collected by Fish and Wildlife staff along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border.

Two deer were detected in Canadian Forces Base Wainwright, which is the farthest west the disease has been detected in wild deer in Alberta to date. The remaining six cases were detected near past positive cases. Staff are in the process of conducting post-hunting-season aerial surveys to count deer near the Alberta/Saskatchewan border (including CFB Wainwright), in order to plan future disease management programs.

For the 2008 hunting season, Sustainable Resource Development increased the number of 24-hr freezers available for hunters to drop off deer heads from 26 to 40. Additionally, three mobile trailers were placed in strategic locations to ensure hunters had every opportunity to submit deer for testing in the area of highest risk of the disease - along the Saskatchewan border in south-central Alberta. Although the 2008 hunter surveillance program is essentially concluded, if any hunter still has frozen deer heads to submit, please drop them off at any Fish and Wildlife office during regular office hours.

With the focus on hunter surveillance, there has been no winter control program in 2009. The previous winter programs involved Sustainable Resource Development staff and contractors collecting and testing wild deer near hunter-harvested positive cases.

Since 2005, there have been 61 cases of chronic wasting disease detected in wild deer in the province (55 mule deer, six white-tailed deer). Ongoing surveillance of wild deer and elk in Alberta began in 1996. The first case in a wild deer in Alberta was discovered in September 2005. For more information on the Alberta Chronic Wasting Disease Program, please visit www.srd.alberta.ca.

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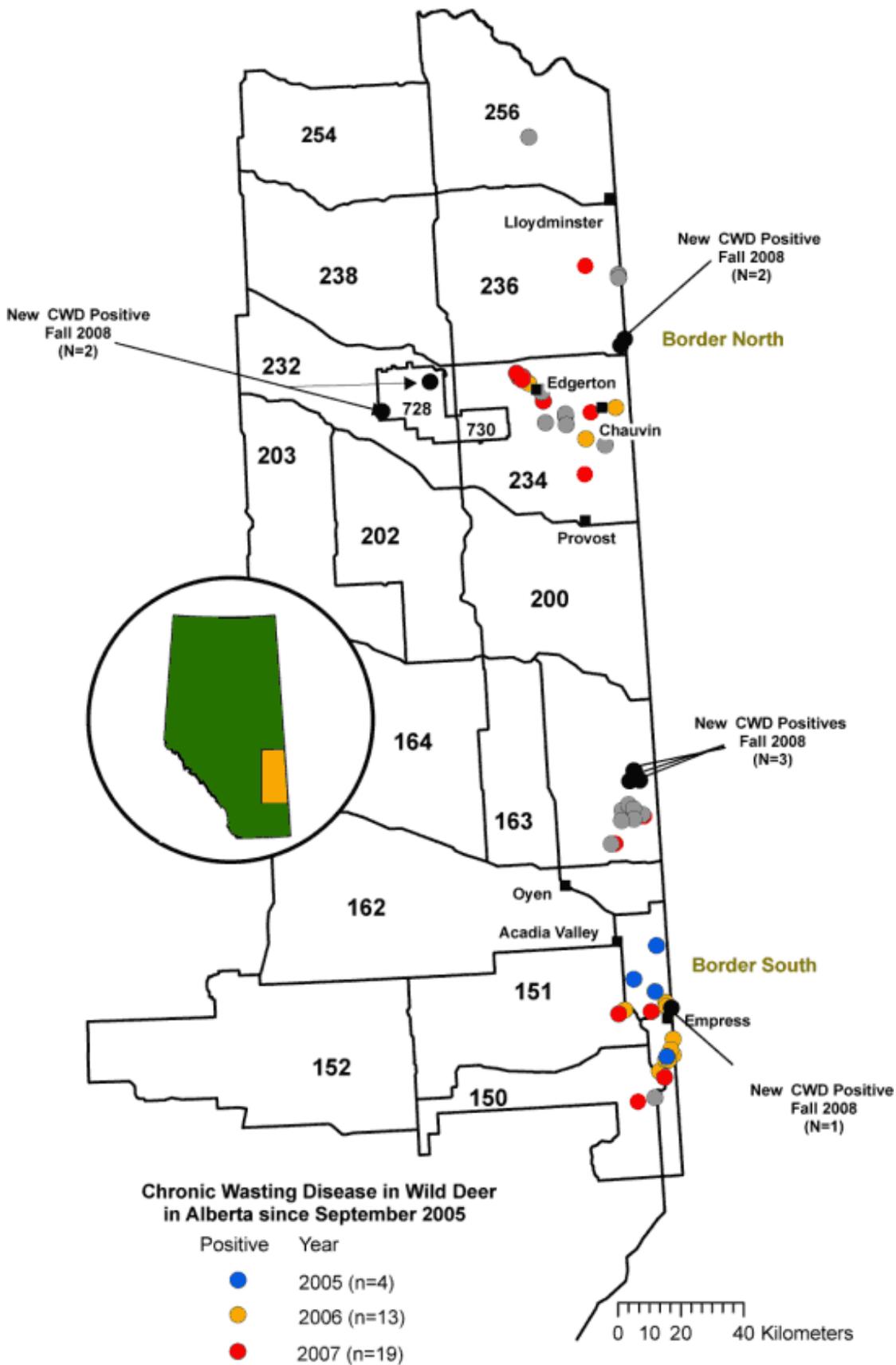
Attachments: Map of chronic wasting disease cases in wild deer in Alberta

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- 2008 (n=17)
- 2008 Fall Surveillance (n=8)



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