

April 1, 2011

Nineteen new cases of chronic wasting disease in wild deer

Hunters continue to play key role in monitoring the disease

Edmonton... Nineteen new cases of chronic wasting disease were identified among more than 5,000 hunter-killed deer tested in Alberta since September 1, 2010. The new cases involve 17 mule deer and two-white tailed deer. While testing on the deer received to date is now complete, the surveillance program continues year-round.

Four new cases in wild deer were detected along the Red Deer River near Dinosaur Provincial Park. These mark the westernmost cases in the province. In addition, a new case east of Derwent is the first directly linked to the main valley of the North Saskatchewan River.

Current strategies for monitoring the spread of chronic wasting disease include maximizing the harvest of deer in risk areas and tracking the change in geographic and numerical distribution of the disease. New plans for management are also being examined.

Testing of road-kill and any wild deer, elk, or moose that show signs consistent with chronic wasting disease will also continue. The signs include loss of coordination, weight loss and excessive salivating. The surveillance program is currently testing a subsample of deer that have died as a result of this year's harsh winter conditions across the province. The only wild deer that have ever tested positive for the disease in Alberta have been in the south-east region of the province.

A road-killed deer that tested positive in February of 2010 brings the total to 20 new cases of chronic wasting disease identified last year. Since the first case was detected in 2005, there have been 94 cases of the disease detected in wild deer in the province. Ongoing surveillance of wild deer and elk in Alberta began in 1998. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that chronic wasting disease can affect humans. For more information on the chronic wasting disease program, visit www.srd.alberta.ca/BioDiversityStewardship/WildlifeDiseases.

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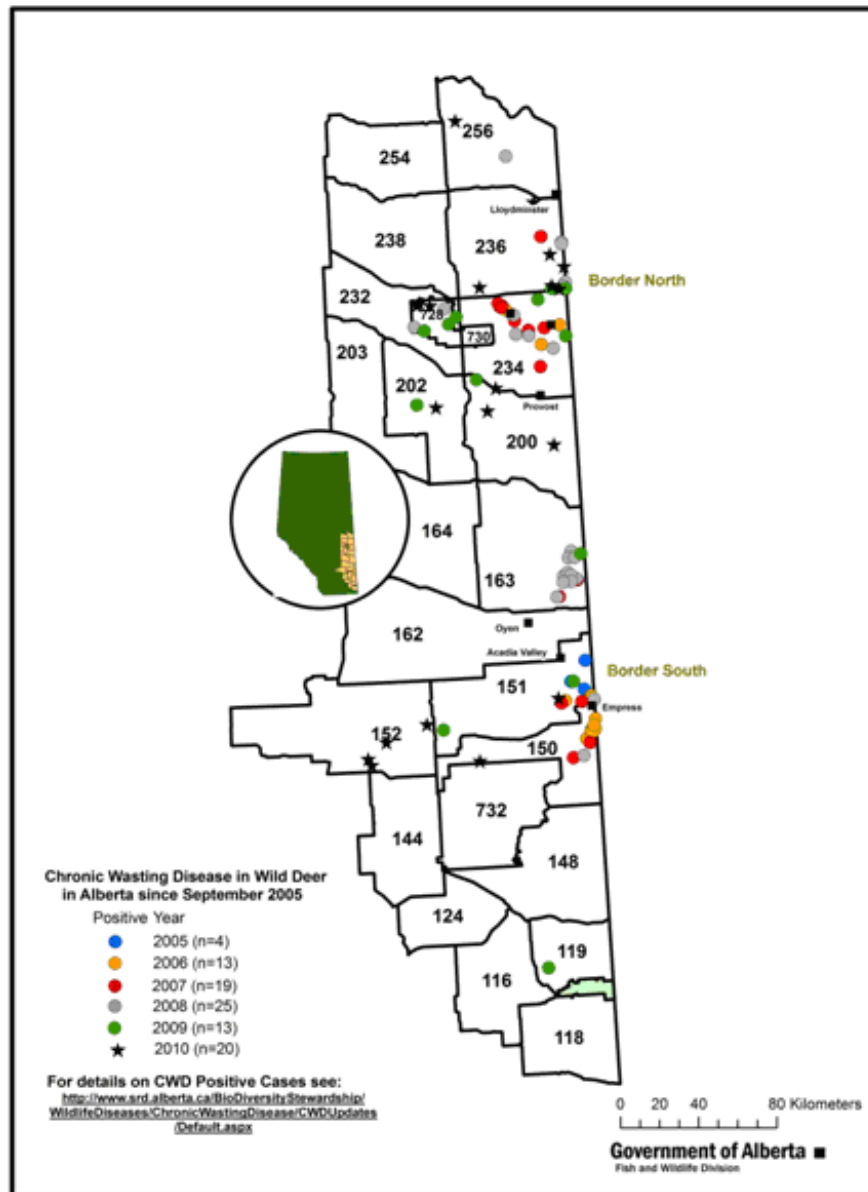
Backgrounder: CWD distribution in wild deer in Alberta, March 18, 2011.

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