

GRAND TETON ELK REDUCTION PROGRAM

MANDATORY CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE SAMPLE SUBMISSION

Background

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a contagious, fatal disease of cervid populations (deer, elk, and moose) for which there is no vaccine or known treatment. CWD belongs to a category of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies or prion diseases. Other diseases in this category include mad cow disease in cattle, scrapie in goats and sheep, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. This disease is caused by abnormal proteins called prions and is induced in animals when the normal proteins turn into prions, which causes brain cells to die. As more brain cells die, the disease progresses, which includes emaciation, behavioral changes, excessive salivation and drinking, lethargy, and, ultimately, death. These signs are not specific to CWD and a definitive diagnosis is only made by laboratory testing of the central or peripheral nervous system tissues collected from dead animals.

CWD was first documented in a wild, buck mule deer in Grand Teton National Park in November 2018. Subsequently, CWD was detected in an elk harvested during the park's Elk Reduction Program in December 2020 through the mandatory testing program. With the detection of CWD in elk in the park, the National Park Service (NPS) is continuing enhanced surveillance efforts including **mandatory** collection of elk heads for all elk harvested during the parks' Elk Reduction Program (ERP). NPS personnel will collect samples from the heads and submit for testing. The information below provides details on the mandatory sampling program. Failure to submit the head for CWD sample collection may result in a fine and forfeiture of this permit and may be reason to deny participation in future Elk Management Programs. If you need assistance with any hunt regulations, contact a Park Ranger (307-739-3301) or a Wyoming Game and Fish Warden (307-733-2321).

Head Drop Stations

Dropping your elk head off at the designated head drop station is required only if staff has not already collected CWD samples in the field—*please do not drop off an elk head that has already been sampled for CWD monitoring*. **If you plan to have your elk processed, you must remove the head and place in the head drop prior to dropping it off at the meat processor.** It is your responsibility to ensure that we receive the head with a completed and legible head tag so we can match the samples to your permit. In 2021, a single head drop station will be available at Moose adjacent to where teeth and permits are submitted southeast of the park headquarters building.

Head submission instructions will be provided at each sampling location and are detailed in the numbered steps below.

1. Cut off the head **and the first six inches** (about hand width) of the neck.
2. Fill out the CWD sampling tag completely and legibly and include your name, State of Wyoming Sportsman ID number, email address, phone number, and harvest location (be as specific as possible, which could include geographic coordinates).

3. Affix the CWD tag to the elk head by cutting a small hole in the ear and threading and tying off wire of CWD tag through this hole or securely wrapping the wire around an ear.
4. Deposit the head and first few inches of the neck into the bear-resistant receptacle.
5. Ensure that the head receptacle is properly closed and secured.

Heads will be picked up routinely by NPS staff. Samples will be submitted to the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory for testing.

CWD Test Results

If the Sportsman ID is provided on the carcass tag, ERP participants can check their results online at <https://wgfapps.wyo.gov/CWDSurveillance/frmLookup.aspx>. Results are generally available 2–3 weeks after submission. If contact information is provided, hunters will be notified of positive test results.

Precautions

Elk Reduction Program participants should not harvest animals that appear sick, nor should they eat meat from suspect animals. The NPS advises participants to take these simple precautions when handling their elk carcass:

- Do not handle or consume elk that appear sick. Instead, contact Teton Interagency Dispatch (307-739-3301) and notify them of the location of the sick animal.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that hunters **do not** consume meat from animals known to be infected with CWD.
- Wear latex, nitrile, or rubber gloves when field dressing your elk.
- Bone out the meat, and avoid consuming the brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen and lymph nodes of harvested animals.
- Minimize handling of soft tissues and fluids. Wash hands with soap and warm water after handling any parts of the carcass.
- Knives, saws, and cutting table surfaces should be disinfected using a solution of 50 percent household bleach for at least an hour.
- Please contact Sarah Dewey, wildlife biologist for the park, for additional information: Phone: (307) 739-3488, Email: sarah_dewey@nps.gov

Links for additional Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/prions/cwd/index.html>

Wyoming Game and Fish Department: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Wildlife-in-Wyoming/More-Wildlife/Wildlife-Disease/Chronic-Wasting-Disease>