



For Immediate Release
March 31, 2021

Chronic Wasting Disease Discovered at Deer Breeding Facilities in Hunt and Uvalde Counties

AUSTIN – Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been discovered in deer breeding facilities in both Hunt and Uvalde counties. This marks the first positive detection of the disease in Hunt County.

The tissue samples were submitted by the deer breeding facilities as part of required CWD surveillance programs. The samples indicated the presence of CWD during testing at the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) in College Station on March 23 for the Uvalde County facility. Samples indicated the presence of CWD during testing at the TVMDL on March 24 for the Hunt County facility. The National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, has since confirmed CWD in those tissue samples, but the samples reported for Hunt County are undergoing DNA testing to confirm animal identification and origin.

Officials have taken immediate action to secure all deer at the Uvalde County and Hunt County deer breeding facilities and plan to conduct additional investigations for CWD. In addition, other breeding facilities that received deer from these facilities or shipped deer to these facilities during the last five years are under movement restrictions and cannot move or release deer at this time.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) are working together to determine the extent of the disease within the facilities and evaluate risks to Texas' free ranging deer populations. Quick detection of CWD can help mitigate the disease's spread.

"Recent CWD discoveries in new locations across the state are deeply concerning and underscore the criticality of redoubling efforts to help arrest the spread of this disease," said Carter Smith, Executive Director of TPWD. "While it is important to realize that CWD is still not widespread in Texas, complacency is not an option. The only way to ensure we are effective in combating the further spread of CWD is with the active help of hunters, wildlife managers, deer breeders, and landowners. Clearly, it is imperative that we work together to protect our native deer populations to ensure the health and vitality of one of our state's greatest natural resources."

Although animal health and wildlife officials cannot determine how long or to what extent the disease has been present in these deer breeding facilities, both breeding facilities have active CWD surveillance programs with no positives detected until now.

CWD was first recognized in 1967 in captive mule deer in Colorado. CWD has also been documented in captive and/or free-ranging deer in 26 states and 3 Canadian provinces.

In Texas, the disease was first discovered in 2012 in free-ranging mule deer along a remote area of the Hueco Mountains near the Texas-New Mexico border and has since been detected in 220 captive or free-ranging



cervids, including white-tailed deer, mule deer, red deer and elk in 11 Texas counties. For more information on previous detections visit the [CWD page](#) on the TPWD website.

CWD is a fatal neurological disease found in certain cervids, including deer, elk, moose and other members of the deer family. CWD is a slow and progressive disease. Due to a long incubation, cervids infected with CWD may not produce any visible signs for a number of years after becoming infected. As the disease progresses, animals with CWD show changes in behavior and appearance. Clinical signs may include, progressive weight loss, stumbling or tremors with a lack of coordination, excessive thirst, salivation or urination, loss of appetite, teeth grinding, abnormal head posture, and/or drooping ears.

“The incubation period of CWD can span years creating disease management challenges,” said Dr. Andy Schwartz, TAHC State Veterinarian. “Response staff are diligently working to address each herd affected by these new detections to manage further spread.”

To date there is no evidence that CWD poses a risk to humans or non-cervids. However, as a precaution, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization recommend not to consume meat from infected animals.

For more information about CWD, visit the [TPWD web site](#) or the [TAHC web site](#).

###

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) was established in 1893 as the Livestock Sanitary Commission and charged with protecting the state's domestic animals "from all contagious or infectious diseases of a malignant character." TAHC remains true to this charge while evolving with the times to protect the health and marketability of all Texas livestock and poultry. Learn more about the TAHC by visiting www.tahc.texas.gov.