

Questions and Answers : Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program

Q. What is chronic wasting disease (CWD)?

A. CWD is a fatal neurological disease of deer, elk and moose and is in the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. There is no evidence that CWD can be transmitted to humans.

Q. How widespread is CWD in the United States?

A. Since 1997, the United States has identified 55 CWD-positive captive cervid herds in 11 states. Nine positive herds remain and are held in quarantine status. CWD has been reported in free-ranging cervids in 16 states. The most recent detection of CWD on a farmed cervid operation occurred in Minnesota in May 2012.

Q. What has been done to address CWD in farmed and captive cervids in the United States?

A. In 2003, APHIS began developing a national regulatory program to address and control CWD in farm-raised and captive cervids in the United States. APHIS undertook development of this regulatory program in consultation with states, the farmed cervid industry and the United States Animal Health Association. APHIS published a final rule establishing a regulatory program for the control of CWD in 2006. However, State animal health and wildlife agencies raised concerns about certain provisions in the rule and APHIS delayed implementation. In March 2009, APHIS published a revised proposal for public comment to address the concerns communicated to the Agency in 2006.

Many States have developed and implemented their own regulatory programs to address and control the spread of the disease in cervid herds in their States.

Q. What does the 2012 amended CWD final rule entail?

A. The interim final rule responds to the concerns raised to APHIS in 2006 and finalizes the changes

to the CWD program APHIS proposed in March, 2009. It establishes a voluntary national CWD Herd Certification Program (HCP), providing consistent minimum standards for participating states and minimum requirements for the interstate movement of cervids. States that participate in the HCP must establish programs that are approved by APHIS.

The interim final rule continues the cooperative effort between USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), State animal health and wildlife agencies, and the cervid industry. APHIS will coordinate with State agencies to encourage deer, elk, and moose owners to certify their herds as low risk for CWD by being in continuous compliance with the CWD Herd Certification Program standards.

Q. How has USDA addressed stakeholder concerns about the CWD rule published in 2006?

A. The 2006 CWD rule was published but not implemented as a result of 3 stakeholder petitions. In response to the concerns raised in those petitions, in 2009, APHIS published proposed changes to the rule for public review and comment. USDA considered the public comments received and drafted this amended CWD rule.

Q. How will the CWD program help the farmed and captive cervid industry?

A. The rule supports the farmed cervid industry by putting in place uniform standards for state CWD herd certification programs and for interstate movement of cervids. It addresses the industry's desire to have in place a national program that provides uniform certification standards and supports domestic and international marketability for the industry.

Q. Do we really need a national CWD HCP?

A. Yes. The objective of the national CWD HCP is to lower the risk for introduction of CWD or to help control CWD in farmed/captive cervids by requiring consistent herd management practices as well as CWD surveillance in enrolled cervid herds. Enrolled herds that achieve and maintain certified status can be considered to be at low risk for CWD and animals from those certified herds are eligible for interstate movement.

Q. Given the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2013 provides minimal funding for CWD, how will APHIS manage implementation of the CWD HCP?

A. Costs for the program, including routine testing, will be provided primarily by States and producers wishing to participate in the program. APHIS will support confirmatory testing of presumptive CWD cases but, otherwise, act in an advisory capacity and approve State applications and conduct periodic State reviews to ensure compliance.

Q. How will federal CWD HCP standards be administered?

A. States having a CWD HCP may apply for federal approval of their State's program. APHIS will review state programs and approve the programs that meet minimum federal standards. Approved States will administer their Approved State CWD HCP and work with enrolled producers to comply with the federal standards to achieve or maintain the certified status of their herd, or herds. Approved States will be supporting the health of their farmed/captive cervid industry, facilitating interstate commerce of certified herds, and contributing to national efforts to minimize introduction and transmission of CWD in cervid populations.

Q. What are the requirements for a State to become a CWD HCP participant?

A. States interested in having their State CWD HCP approved should submit the required application and supporting documents to APHIS for review and approval. Application materials should be sent to the Area Veterinarian in Charge (AVIC) in the APHIS Veterinary Service (VS) Area Office in the requesting State. Information provided must describe the State's CWD prevention and control activities, and the deer, elk, and moose herd certification activities, and cite relevant State statutes, regulations, and directives pertaining to animal health activities and reports and publications of the State. This must include:

- Movement restrictions,
- Surveillance and disease reporting capabilities,
- Herd/animal identification requirements
- Diagnostic testing capacities,
- Recordkeeping and data management,
- Ability to conduct epidemiologic investigations and trace-outs
- Education and outreach

Details of requirements are described in 9 CFR Part 55.23.

Q. What must a herd owner do to become a CWD HCP participant?

A. Herd owners seeking approval to participate in their Approved State CWD HCP should contact their State agency for information on herd owner enrollment

and State requirements. In general, herd owners may be eligible to enroll in an Approved State CWD HCP if they:

- Add to their herds only animals that are from herds enrolled in the CWD Herd Certification Program, to ensure that animals added to herds are of known risk. Additions to the herd should be from other enrolled herds of equal or greater status in the program.
- Maintain perimeter fencing adequate to prevent entry or exit of cervids, and to minimize the possibility of CWD transmission by direct contact between farmed and free-ranging wild cervid populations.
- Report to APHIS or the State all animals that escape or disappear, and report to APHIS or the State all animals that die or are killed and make their carcasses available for tissue sampling and testing.

Minimum federal standards for herd owner enrollment in their State CWD HCP are described in the 9 CFR Part 55.22.

Q. What must a herd owner do to move their cervid(s) interstate?

A. In order for herd owners to move an animal(s) interstate, their farmed cervid herd must be enrolled in an Approved State CWD HCP, the herd must be in compliance with federal CWD HCP standards, and the herd must have achieved 'Certified Status'.

The animal(s) to be moved interstate also must be accompanied by a certificate that identifies its herd of origin, states that the herd has achieved "Certified status," and that the animal(s) does not show clinical signs associated with CWD.

Q. Will I be allowed to transit through a State that does not allow entry of cervids to get to my destination?

A. Owners of enrolled herds that have achieved "Certified Status" and are eligible to move their animals interstate will be allowed to transit through a State that restricts entry of those animals while en route to their State of destination, if all requirements for movement are met.

Q. What if I want to move a cervid interstate from a free-ranging, wild population?

A. For deer, elk, or moose captured from a wild population for interstate movement and release, they must be accompanied by a statement that documents the animals are from a source population that is low risk for CWD, based on a CWD surveillance program that is approved by the State Government of the receiving State and APHIS. States that want to facilitate such movement will need to have a CWD surveillance program in place for their wild populations.

Details for interstate movement of free-ranging cervids are described in 9 CFR Part 81.

Q. What other cervids may be eligible for interstate movement?

A. Other cervids eligible are farmed/captive cervids moved directly to a recognized slaughter establishment, cervids moved under research animal permit for research purposes, and other interstate movements as approved by the APHIS Administrator. Details for such interstate movement requirements and restrictions are described in 9 CFR Part 81.

Q. What are the benefits of becoming a participant in an Approved State CWD HCP?

A. Herd owners enrolled in their Approved State CWD HCP whose herds have achieved herd certification status are eligible to move their animal(s) interstate. By meeting federal CWD HCP standards, enrolled herd owners also will be contributing to the prevention and control of CWD in farmed cervid herds and to the risk reduction for potential CWD transmission between farmed cervid and free-ranging wild cervid populations. Animal sales between enrolled herd owners who maintain compliance with program requirements help to ensure that animals purchased will be at lower risk for CWD.

Q. As an owner of an enrolled herd, what precautions should I take when purchasing cervids for my herd?

A. The purchase and addition of cervids to enrolled herds should be limited to cervids sourced from other enrolled herds at equal or greater herd status in the CWD HCP to minimize risk of CWD introduction to the herd.

Q. Will the CWD rule preempt State's regulatory authorities?

A. This amended CWD rule does not preempt State laws with the exception of allowing farmed or captive cervids enrolled in an Approved CWD HCP Program that have achieved "Certified Status" and are eligible for interstate movement to transit through a State that would, otherwise, restrict such entry.

Q. Do I have to be enrolled in an Approved State CWD HCP if the cervid species I raise is not known to be susceptible to CWD?

A. No. The federal rule establishes federal standards for a voluntary Approved State CWD HCP and includes cervids in the genera *Cervus*, *Odocoileus*, and *Alces* and their hybrids. These genera represent cervids known to be susceptible to CWD. Individual States may have additional requirements for other cervid species not included in the federal rule.

Q. I have a certified herd in a State with CWD in free-ranging animals. Will I still be able to move animals from my herd interstate?

A. Yes. To do so, the farmed cervid herd must be enrolled in an Approved State CWD HCP, the herd must be in compliance with Federal CWD HCP standards, and must have achieved 'Certified Status.' The animal(s) to be moved interstate also must be accompanied by a certificate that identifies its herd of origin, states that the herd has achieved "Certified status", and that the animal(s) does not show clinical signs associated with CWD.

Q. What about interstate movement of other cervid "species" not known to be susceptible to CWD?

A. The interstate movement of other cervid species not known to be susceptible to CWD is not restricted by this rule. However, individual States may have additional requirements for other cervid species not included in the federal rule.

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