

DNR: Hosts “Midwest CWD Collaboration Meeting” to discuss best management practices for controlling chronic wasting disease in deer population

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MADISON, Wis. – Wildlife biologists from several Midwestern states, members of Wisconsin Tribal Nations, plus state and federal conservation groups are meeting July 24-25 in Madison to discuss chronic wasting disease (CWD) management and research efforts across the region.

This two-day working meeting will have a heavy focus on the latest data available on how CWD is affecting each states' wild deer population. Another goal of the meeting is to determine best practices for working together across state borders to prevent the spread of CWD.

“The many issues of CWD impact more than just the state of Wisconsin. The research shows that we need to talk to our neighbors around the Great Lakes and other nearby states so we can get in front of the spread of CWD,” said DNR Secretary-designee Preston Cole. “CWD has been on the landscape for some time. By working together, by sharing research and management innovations, we can do what it takes to help slow it down. The more the science shows us, the more prepared we can be moving forward.”

CWD is a contagious neurological disease of deer, elk and moose that is caused by an abnormal protein called a prion. These prions cause brain degeneration in infected animals and lead to extreme weight loss, abnormal behavior and loss of bodily functions. This always fatal disease was first found in Wisconsin in 2002 through testing of hunter-harvested deer in November 2001. There are currently 56 CWD affected counties across the state.

“As someone who has spent many mornings in a deer stand, I know firsthand how vital it is that we maintain a healthy deer herd across our state. The threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has the potential to devastate our deer herds, hurting the outdoor economy and outdoor traditions that so many Wisconsin communities benefit from,” said U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-La Crosse). “Today’s meeting is a good – and long overdue – step toward tackling the CWD crisis that plagues our state. I applaud Secretary-designee Cole for putting today’s meeting together and hope that the federal government will soon follow suit by providing more support to our state wildlife agencies who are dedicated to combatting CWD.”

Attendees will spend two days discussing unique, successful approaches that states have used to engage the public, manage CWD and increase CWD surveillance efforts. They will also talk about current CWD research into management applications and determine if management actions taken in other states can be successfully replicated.