

Dept. of Natural Resources: Confirms epizootic hemorrhagic disease in La Crosse county deer

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LA CROSSE, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) confirms that a tissue sample collected from a deer in La Crosse County tested positive for the virus that causes epizootic hemorrhagic disease. The disease was detected after a landowner reported eight dead deer on a 200-acre property south of La Crosse.

The virus that causes epizootic hemorrhagic disease can be carried by midges, which are small flies also known as biting gnats or no-see-ums. The virus does not infect humans even if a person handles infected deer, eats venison from infected deer or are bitten by infected midges.

Signs of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease In Deer

Clinical signs of epizootic hemorrhagic disease in deer include excessive salivation or foaming around the nose and mouth, appearing weak and approachable by humans, and carcasses found in or near water sources, as infected deer will often lay in water to cool down or drink.

How To Report Sick Or Dead Deer

To report a sick or dead deer, contact your [county wildlife biologist](#). If epizootic hemorrhagic disease is suspected, fresh samples will need to be collected within a day or two of death to be useful for detecting the virus. Those reporting suspected cases will need to provide details about the condition of the deer, its exact location and the condition of the carcass(es).

The DNR will not collect or remove deer that are suspected to have died from epizootic hemorrhagic disease. Carcasses from deer that die of epizootic hemorrhagic disease are not a threat to spreading the disease to other deer, as the virus does not survive for long once an infected deer dies. The DNR advises against handling any found deer carcasses as other pathogens harmful to humans could be present.

“We’re grateful that the public is tuned in to the herd’s health and quick to report these mortalities,” said Paul Napierala, the DNR’s Wildlife Biologist for La Crosse County. “Keep reporting sick or dead deer. Your observations help us evaluate the potential geographic distribution and number of deer affected by this disease.”

About Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease

Epizootic hemorrhagic disease is common across the southern and western United States, occasionally showing up in the Midwest. It can be fatal to deer, especially in populations that have limited previous exposure to the virus, such as in Wisconsin. The disease is typically short-lived, as the flies that transmit the disease die with the first hard frost. When deer die of epizootic hemorrhagic disease, it typically happens within seven days of infection.

Epizootic hemorrhagic disease has previously been identified in Wisconsin, generally with varying localized impacts on deer. In fall 2020, there were small outbreaks of less than 50 deer each in Oconto and Buffalo counties. In fall 2019, an epizootic hemorrhagic disease outbreak in Crawford and six surrounding counties affected approximately 300 deer. A single case was confirmed in 2017. In 2012, an epizootic hemorrhagic disease outbreak was suspected of killing approximately 380 deer in Dane and Columbia counties.

[Additional information about epizootic hemorrhagic disease is available on the DNR’s website.](#)