

Venison and CWD - What Hunters should Know

Information from the Wisconsin Division of Public Health

Chronic Wasting Disease is a fatal disease that affects the nervous system of deer, elk, and moose. The disease is caused by an abnormal protein called a prion, which can survive cooking temperatures. Prions concentrate in certain tissues, such as brain, spinal cord, lymph nodes, and spleen, and are present in lower concentrations in other tissues such as muscle. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that to date, there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in people. However, in the interest of safety, the CDC advises that hunters not consume meat from deer, elk, or moose which test positive for CWD.

In keeping with this recommendation, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health recommends that venison from deer harvested in CWD affected areas not be consumed or distributed to others until CWD test results on the source deer are known to be negative.

If you have your deer or elk commercially processed, consider asking that your animal be processed individually to avoid mixing meat from multiple animals. Venison from multiple deer should be kept separate and labeled before freezing.

For more information on human prion disease, call the WI Department of Health Services at (608) 267-9003.

Safe Handling of Deer

General Precautions

- Do not eat the eyes, brain, spinal cord, spleen, tonsils, or lymph nodes of any deer.
- Do not eat any part of a deer that appears abnormal.
- If your deer is sampled for CWD testing, wait for test results before eating the meat.

Hunters

- **Wear rubber or latex gloves** when field dressing carcasses.
- **Bone out** the meat from your animal.
- **Remove** all internal organs.
- **Minimize the handling** of brain, spinal cord, spleen, and lymph nodes.
- **Do not use** household knives or utensils.
- **Use equipment** dedicated to field dressing only.
- **Thoroughly clean knives and equipment.** After cleaning, use a 50/50 solution of chlorine bleach and water to soak all butchering tools for one hour and to wipe down all countertops and work areas.
- **Request** that your animal be processed individually and not combined with meat from other animals.
- **Avoid use of saws.** Do not cut through spine or skull except to remove the head. Use a knife designated only for this purpose.

