

Yukon Mandatory Cervid Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program

Background

At the request of the Game Growers Association and implemented by the Yukon Agriculture Branch, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources this document sets forth the *Yukon Mandatory Cervid Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program*. This document describes the program and its requirements. Chronic Wasting Disease is a Reportable Disease under the federal Health of Animals Act.

Mandatory participation in the surveillance program is necessary to establish that CWD is not present in any Yukon game farmed cervids. The goal of the program is the submission of 100% of heads from dead game farm cervids over 12 months old. Starting on April 1, 2003 the following condition will be on your game farm license:

"The licensee must adhere to the Yukon Mandatory Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program by submitting to an accredited veterinarian, the entire head and top four inches of the neck of any cervid over 12 months of age that is killed or otherwise dies for any reason, along with the appropriate unique identification and a copy of the Elk Inventory Certificate. This condition shall be in effect January 1, 2003 until the expiry date of the licence."

This program will replace the *Yukon Voluntary CWD Surveillance Program* that has been in effect since January of 2001.

The *Yukon Mandatory Cervid CWD Surveillance Program* is based on current knowledge about CWD, recommendations from the scientific community and on the CFIA standards. The requirements for the program may change as more is learned of CWD, as new tests become available or when there is a shift in public confidence. The Yukon Game Growers Association has been instrumental in promoting and supporting the CWD Surveillance Program.

The Yukon Government and its employees are not liable to the participating producer or to any other person for any act done or omitted to be done whatsoever in connection with this program. The producer assumes sole responsibility for any death losses (e.g. from capture myopathy) that may occur when animals are being handled to conduct a physical inventory.

Game farm operators must comply with the Game Farm Regulations under the Wildlife Act.

The Government of Yukon reserves the right to make changes to this program from time to time.

Details of the Program

Compliance

1. The operator must report all deaths of cervids over 12 months of age and submit the head (outlined in Appendix 1) to an accredited veterinarian.
2. To ensure compliance, the Agriculture Branch in conjunction with industry will monitor the percentage of head submission.

Importing cervids from jurisdictions without a surveillance program or from a zoo is an unacceptable practice due to increased potential for spreading disease.

Identification

3. Each game farm animal must be uniquely identified as per specifications set out in the Yukon Game Farm Regulations. (s.23 Game Farm Regulations) Unique identification requires:
 - One of the following:
 - Sheep tag;
 - Dangle tag;
 - These tags must be:
 - Issued by the Agriculture Branch or by another government jurisdiction;
 - With the animal from birth to death;
 - Unique to the animal;
 - Replaced by the same unique tag ordered from the Yukon Agriculture Branch if the original tag is lost;
 - Clipped on by November 30th following birth.

Herd Inventory

4. Game farm licenses and all inventories and reports must be current as required by the Game Farm Regulations. (s.30 Game Farm Regulations)
5. Upon receipt of an annual inventory report (due by March 31st of every year) from the game farm operator, the Yukon Agriculture Branch will notify the operator of any discrepancies between the annual inventory report and the Game Farm Database.

Physical Audit

6. A physical audit will be done at the start of the program to reconcile current records. This physical audit will be repeated once every three years to inspect each animal and confirm Yukon Agriculture Branch inventory data.
 - Physical audits can be done by:
 - By a CFIA veterinarian;
 - By the Yukon Agriculture Branch.
 - Physical audits require the reading of the unique identification on all cervids.
 - The reading of the unique identification may require putting the animals through a handling system.

Submission of Tissue Samples

7. When a cervid dies that is 12 months of age or older, for any reason including slaughter, the following must be done:
 - Report to Yukon Agriculture by telephoning 667-5838 or faxing to 393-6222;
 - Return the animal's Elk Inventory Certificate to the Yukon Agriculture Branch with all pertinent information filled in;
 - Submit the appropriate tissues or head in a state approved for CWD testing to an accredited veterinarian:
 - Tests for CWD will be done at a CFIA certified lab (see Appendix 2);
 - The laboratory costs for the CWD tests will be covered by the Yukon Agriculture Branch;

The meat from slaughtered animals must not be released for human consumption until the test results prove that CWD was not present in the animal.

8. If an animal is to be slaughtered, the following must be done:
 - The Agriculture Branch Meat Inspector must be present; (s.26 Game Farm Regulations)
 - The obex of the brain must remain intact and in a state approved for CWD testing.
9. If the dead animals are not reported to the Yukon Agriculture Branch or the head (outlined in Appendix 1) is not submitted to an accredited veterinarian, these actions will result in the reevaluation of the game farmer's game farm license.
10. If any animal appears sick or shows any clinical signs of CWD (as listed in Appendix 3) for more than two weeks an accredited veterinarian must be contacted. (s.13 Game Farm Regulations)

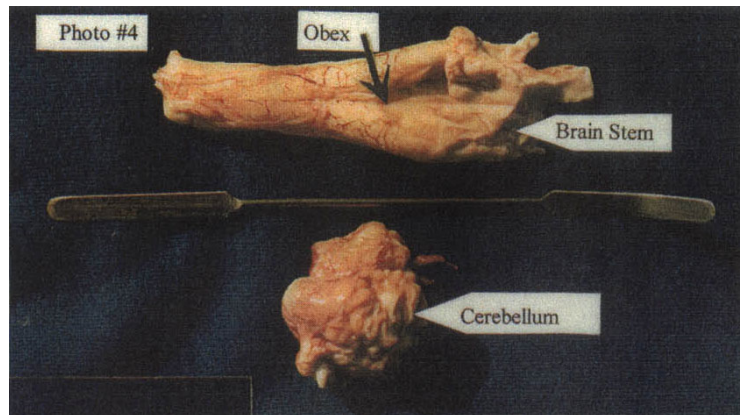
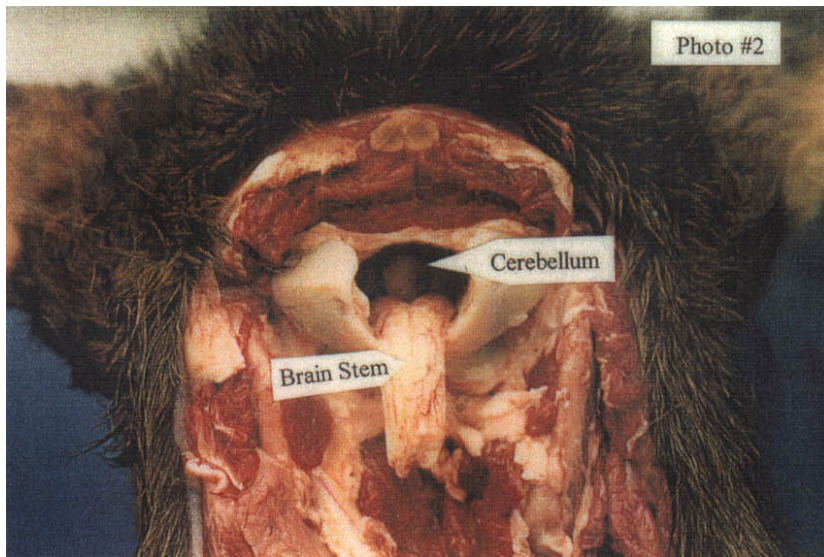
Release of Information

11. The *Yukon Mandatory Cervid CWD Surveillance Program* allows the release of the following information:
- CFIA to release Transportation Authorization Permits to Yukon Agriculture Branch;
 - Yukon Agriculture Branch to give a CWD status update to CFIA on a yearly basis;
 - Yukon Agriculture Branch to issue a letter of compliance to a game farm operator at their request;
 - Accredited lab (detailed in Appendix 2) to release CWD test results to CFIA, Yukon Agriculture Branch and the accredited veterinarian;
 - Accredited veterinarian to release CWD test results to the game farm operator.

Appendix 1 Brain Tissue Sample Collection and Storage

The head is to be submitted to an accredited veterinarian. The head and top four inches of the neck below the base of the skull must be submitted. Brain tissue deteriorates very quickly. Fresh heads must be refrigerated and reach the accredited veterinarian within 24 hours of death for examination for CWD. If delivery will be delayed beyond 24 hours, then the head must be frozen.

On receipt of the head, an accredited veterinarian will extract the appropriate sample and divide the sample so that one portion of the brain tissue is immediately put in 10% buffered neutral formalin and the second portion of brain tissue frozen. Photo 4 shows the appropriate brain tissue needed for CWD testing.



Appendix 2

Approved Laboratories for Diagnostic Testing for Chronic Wasting Disease

Memorandum of Understanding Signed between Yukon Agriculture and Alberta
Agriculture September 01, 2002 to August 31, 2003.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Attn: Dr B. Miller
Agri-Food Surveillance Systems, Food Safety Division
Main Floor, OS Longman Building
6909-116 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T6H 4P2

Appendix 3

Clinical Neurologic Signs of CWD

The operator or owner responsible for the herd must report to the herd veterinarian the following signs that could suggest the presence of CWD in a cervid when the animal is more than 12 months of age:

- abnormal aggression, panic or difficulty in judging space and distance:
 - this usually leads to the longer lasting type of the disease, but in some cases the animal is injured or even killed by running into fences and equipment when being handled;
 - the animal may be found in a fence corner unable to get out, and eventually ends up back in another corner even when moved;

- the animal appears to be depressed and unaware of its surroundings:
 - the depression might be shown by the failure of the cervid to notice humans entering a facility;
 - ears frequently drop from the normal alert position
 - the animal may be separated from the remainder of the herd and may drop in status within the herd so it may be the last to the feed;

- may have trouble swallowing:
 - they may drool a great deal and the throat and chest may be wet from saliva or water;
 - food material may get into their lungs causing pneumonia that, if treated with antibiotics, gets better for a short time, but the animal will eventually die despite treatment;

- gradual loss of weight and condition:
 - this slow loss of weight gave the disease the name 'chronic wasting disease', but the weight loss may not always be obvious until a postmortem is completed;
 - on postmortem there is a complete loss of body fat;
 - the animal may keep its winter coat long after it should, with the coat appearing dull, lighter in colour and stand straight up.

Producers should also be aware that other diseases or conditions may cause similar signs and the only way to eliminate CWD as the cause is through the post mortem examination of the brain using immunohistochemistry testing.