

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Yukon CWD Voluntary Herd Certification Program

March 20, 2018

INTRODUCTION

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a progressive, fatal, degenerative disease of the brain affecting cervid species such as elk, mule deer, moose and caribou. In Canada, CWD is a "federally reportable disease". This means that producers or veterinarians must notify the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) of all suspected or confirmed cases. Further information on this disease is available at:

http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/agriculture/disease_monitoring.html .

The National Chronic Wasting Disease Voluntary Herd Certification Program sets the minimum standards for related regional programs in Canada and is administered by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The national standards were updated during 2017 and include notable enhancements regarding biosecurity measures. Further information on the national standards can be found in chapter 13 of the Accredited Veterinarian's Manual, on the Canadian Food inspection Agency website (<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/accredited-veterinarian-s-manual/eng/1343915611518/1343915703253>).

Yukon's updated program is based upon the national standards and is referred to in this document as the VHCP. Participation in the VHCP is optional; however once owners/cervid farm operators are enrolled in the VHCP, their compliance with the National Standards and the standard operating procedures (SOP) of the Yukon VHCP is mandatory.

The role of Regional Administrator and Status Assessor are both performed in Yukon by the Agrologist of the Yukon Agriculture Branch. This position is responsible for overseeing enrolment, administration and assessment activities in Yukon Government's VHCP. Further details on all specific roles and responsibilities (eg. Owners/operators, Accredited veterinarians, Approved third parties (eg. Conservation Officers),) are listed in Appendix A: Roles & Responsibilities.

There are four important components of the Yukon VHCP to note where it differs from the national VHCP standards. These include:

- A Yukon Game Farm License from the department of Environment is a requirement for herd enrollment under the Yukon VHCP.
- The requirements and conditions of Yukon's Game Farm Regulations must also be met and adhered to (eg. fencing height, stocking rates).
- In 2009 the Yukon government implemented a moratorium on importing any more game farm animals into the territory as a step towards assisting our VHCP to keep Yukon CWD-free.
- Yukon government implemented the Mandatory Cervid CWD Surveillance Program which requires testing of 100% of heads from dead game farm cervids (natural, euthanized or slaughter) over 12 months old.

ADMINISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT

Initial Application

1. Enrollment application

The enrollment application is available upon request from the Regional Administrator. Once submitted it will be processed by the Regional Administrator within 10 business days.

2. The enrollment application and related paperwork are to be kept in the Yukon CWD Voluntary Herd Certification Program files (**4200-35-02**) by volume (year) and kept for 10 years in Records Management.

3. Ensure the applicant has a valid Yukon Game Farm License from Department of Environment and verify with the CFIA District Office that the premises is not currently subject to any CFIA CWD disease control actions.

4. Verify Enrollment Application Information:

- a) Ensure that all applicable information is present in the **Enrollment Form**.
- b) Producer contact information is complete and the producer signature is present on the application form.
- c) Ensure that the application is accompanied by:
 - a **Site Plan** verified as accurate by the accredited vet, along with a detailed diagram that identifies all structures and grazing areas to which cervids are given access and that are used to store feed, as well as water sources, proximity to other farmed cervid herds and location of fences;
 - (NEW) a **Biosecurity Plan** that identifies all procedures relating to the new biosecurity requirements described in the updated national standards and in this SOP, that are required to prevent potential CWD exposure from wild or infected cervids (through direct contact, stored feed, hay crops, water sources, transportation vehicles) to cervid herds enrolled in the VHCP.
 - the **initial herd inventory prepared by the accredited veterinarian** or by an approved third party (such as the Regional Administrator, Conservation Officers or other approved program staff) within the three-month period immediately prior to acceptance of the application; and
 - **details of their proposed record system.**
- c) Verify that a letter from an accredited veterinarian is attached, and ensure that the veterinarian's name, contact information, and signature are present. At present Yukon only has one accredited/trained veterinarian (Rick Brown, Alpine Veterinary Clinic) to whom all game farmers provide samples.
- d) Verify that the signing Veterinarian is accredited and licensed to practice in Canada. There is no veterinary licensing body in Yukon. Contact the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association to verify licensing. Contact CFIA District Office to determine accreditation.

5. Verify Animal Identification and Record Keeping System:

- a) Record keeping system shall be appropriate for maintaining program status. Every animal born on the farm shall be identified and accounted for and record animals that enter the herd or leave the herd.
- b) Two unique forms of appropriate identification; one of which is an official tag or a tag issued by the Yukon Agriculture Branch, shall be used for all animals, issued by the Regional Administrator. Tags placed on calves before 1 year of age.

6. Verify Herd Inventory:

- a) An inventory including appropriate identification is present.
- b) The initial inventory must contain the following information for all cervids in the herd: species, identification tag/device number(s), sex and date of birth (day, month, year).
- c) The initial inventory must have been completed within three months of the time the application is submitted.
- d) The initial inventory includes both breeding animals and young stock.
- e) Initial inventory must be signed by the approved individual who completed it (see Appendix A: Roles & Responsibilities).

7. Incomplete or Unsatisfactory Initial Application:

- a) If information is incomplete or unsatisfactory, the Regional Administrator will inform the producer (via conversation, voice mail or e-mail) of the discrepancy within one week of processing the application.
- b) A written statement will be issued within two-business days if the method of communication was a phone call (either mailed or e-mail), which confirms the information required for enrollment and states a deadline of 60-days by which the producer must submit information. A copy of the statement will be placed into the producer file and the file flagged for follow up.
- c) If the producer responds with appropriate information, proceed with the application process.
- d) If producer contacts the Regional Administrator within the stated deadline and is willing to comply but needs additional time to complete requirements (e.g. additional sampling and analysis, veterinarian accreditation required, etc.) a new deadline can be issued and the producer will be informed of this decision via letter or email.
- e) If after a 60 day period there is no response from the producer, the application is deemed abandoned. The application will be kept on file for at least 12 months after the original date of the application.

General Administration

8. Entering Information into the Database:

If the producer enrollment application is complete or at the time of an annual inventory, the Regional Administrator will complete the following:

- a) Enter producer information into the Game Farm Database including name, farm name, address, and phone number.
- b) Enter new or changes in herd inventory using the Elk Inventory Submission form.

c) Database maintenance is required on an annual basis to coincide with the producer annual assessment.

9. Assigning Entrance Level & Enrolment Letter

Within one week of processing the initial application, the Regional Administrator will assign an entrance level and a written letter or email is sent to the producer confirming enrollment. A copy of the letter issued for each herd successfully enrolled is kept in the file.

- Unless there are mitigating circumstances, all producers applying will be entered at Level E
- Mitigating circumstances include consideration for country of origin of herd or history of following program requirements. Accelerated admission up to level C of the VHCP may be possible for herds that have met all program requirements for one or more years prior to application. Documentation demonstrating program compliance (collection of heads, yearly inventory, biosecurity measures, etc.) must be verified and reconciled.
- If mitigating circumstances potentially apply to the application, an assessment of the premises history will be considered and the Director of the Yukon Agriculture Branch will consult with the Agrologist of the Yukon Agriculture Branch before assigning an entrance level. Premises history must state that the premises where the herd will reside meets one of the following conditions:
 - the premises has not contained cervids; or
 - it is unknown whether the premises contained cervids; or
 - the premises has contained cervids in the past; in which case, the owner/cervid farm operator must indicate whether or not the previous cervids were enrolled on the VHCP, and if so, at what level.

If it is unknown whether cervids were on the premises previously, or if the cervids were not enrolled on the VHCP, the new herd must start at level E.

If there were no cervids on the premises previously, or the previous cervids on the premises were enrolled on the VHCP, then the new herd may start at the lowest certification level of the cervids being stocked on the premises (following a risk assessment by the status assessor based on the VHCP compliance of the previous cervids).

10. Publishing Updates:

- a) The Regional Administrator will inform the CFIA National Administrator of any changes in new producer enrollment and status via email on a quarterly basis.
- b) Report the update to the Yukon CWD website on a quarterly basis.

ADVANCEMENT OR CHANGES TO STATUS

11. Changes to Certification Level or Status:

The certification status of the herd may be upgraded annually (or maintained at the

certified level) if the following conditions are met:

- the premises is not currently subject to any actions related to a CWD disease control program as confirmed through contact with the CFIA District Office; and
- the herd has met the requirements applicable to its current certification level.

The Regional Administrator will notify the VHCP participants of their upcoming anniversary date at least 60 days in advance, to allow time to make arrangements for scheduling of their herd inventory and annual report requirements.

Failure to submit an annual report at any level within the anniversary quarter (within 15 months of last year's anniversary date) will result in suspension from the VHCP following an investigation/review by the status assessor as follows. If the delay in submission was due to circumstances beyond an owner's/cervid farm operator's control (i.e. emergency, serious illness or death in the family, etc.), the status assessor may, at his or her discretion, grant an extension and has one week to decide whether to grant said extension. If an extension is granted, it should be limited to no more than two weeks from the original deadline, after which the suspension will take effect.

When deficiencies are identified, the status assessor may require that the current level be maintained until the deficiencies are addressed. This decision is at the discretion of the status assessor. However, this should be no longer than one year, after which the status of the herd will be suspended, downgraded or revoked. Once a decision is made, it is documented to the owner/cervid farm operator and copied to the accredited veterinarian, territorial VHCP staff and the regional administrator.

Within 10 business days of all necessary annual advancement information being received, the Status Assessor will process that year's file. If any part of the annual advancement information is incomplete or unsatisfactory, the procedure in Section 21 (Incomplete or Unsatisfactory Application for Advancement) will be applied. Email notification will be used as a reminder for anniversary dates and annual advancement. A copy will be retained in the file.

12. Overdue inventories and annual reports

- a) Send out a written statement providing a grace period of up to 3 months from the producer anniversary date.
- b) Any producers who are more than 3 months past their anniversary date (or inventory date if they are the same) will be immediately suspended.

13. Verify presence of minimum laboratory results:

- a) Verify that there is a valid laboratory analysis result from a CFIA TSE Network Laboratory approved to test samples for the CWD VHCP for each death (natural, euthanized or slaughter) in the herd for elk 12 months of age or older within the previous year. An acceptable laboratory analysis result is "Tested: CWD not detected." Results of "Tested: CWD not detected in secondary target tissue" are permitted only sporadically. See Appendix B part 5 "Results of Analysis on Cervids submitted for CWD Testing."

- b) If the laboratory report is not yet available, verify that there is a submission form indicating that a sample has been submitted for each death in the herd for elk 12 months of age or older within the previous year. Within 30 days, the producer must submit the test result(s) associated with the submission form.
- c) If it is determined that there is a missing laboratory analysis result, refer to Appendix E – Missing Samples Policy.
- d) If applicable, verify if the farm qualifies for an exemption under Appendix B part 6 “Exemptions from Submission of Heads” of the Yukon CWD Voluntary Herd Certification Program.

14. Evaluation of Inventory Documents

- a) Check if the herd is due for a physical or an annual inventory. Physical inventories must be conducted at least every two years.
- b) Ensure that the inventory has been conducted at least three months within the anniversary date.
- c) Verify that the inventory has been conducted and signed by the appropriate individual. Physical inventories must be conducted by the accredited veterinarian or an approved third party as outlined in Appendix A. Annual inventories may be conducted by the producer.
- d) The accuracy of the inventory information and its reconciliation is the responsibility of the accredited veterinarian or the Yukon Agriculture Branch staff person. Verify that one of these individuals has signed the inventory reconciliation.

15. Reconcile Previous and Current Inventories:

- a) Review previous and current inventory.
- b) Ensure that the date of birth and sex of each animal is listed.
- c) For animals on both lists there is no further investigation.
- d) For animals on previous list but not on the current list, verify the following information:
 - i. For live animals leaving the property, verify the presence of a cervid movement permit including individual ID.
 - ii. For live animals leaving the property, verify the transporter. Every third party vehicle that transports cervids must be cleaned and disinfected before loading. The owner will require the third party transporter to provide a statement that indicates the truck was cleaned and disinfected.
 - iii. For every animal that dies on the property verify that the Regional Administrator or the Conservation Officer Services inspected the animal at time of death, signed the Elk Inventory Certificate and noted reason for death. Verify that the head was submitted to the accredited veterinarian (Rick Brown, Alpine Veterinary Clinic) for sampling and tissue submission to a TSE laboratory for CWD testing.
 - iv. All cervids participating the Yukon VHCP that have died or been slaughtered are required to be tested for CWD.
 - v. Verify that all the reports for all samples submitted for CWD testing from the certified laboratory have come back as testing negative for CWD.
- e) For animals on current list but not on previous list, determine:
 - i. Ensure that the date of birth and sex of the animal is listed on the inventory.

- ii. Every animal born on the premises is issued an Elk Inventory Certificate from the Game Farm Database. The Accredited Veterinarian or the Regional Administrator inspects all animals born on the property during the annual herd inspection.
- iii. Every animal that is acquired and moved to the property is issued an Elk Inventory Certificate from the Game Farm Database. Every animal is inspected at time of entry on the property by a Yukon government Conservation Officer (Department of Environment). If purchased, verify herd of origin via a sales receipt. Verify the status of the herd of origin including any suspensions or if enrollment is revoked, anniversary dates and country of origin.
- f) If it is not possible to reconcile the inventory then proceed to program procedures under sections 21 and 22.

16. Verify Accredited Veterinarian’s credentials

Verify that the signing veterinarian is accredited and licensed to practice in Canada. There is no veterinary licensing body in Yukon. Contact the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association to verify licensing. Contact CFIA District Office to determine accreditation.

17. Ensure the applicant has a valid Yukon Government Game Farm License and verify with the CFIA District Office that the premises is not currently subject to any CFIA CWD disease control actions.

18. Annual Inspection

Inspections will be conducted annually by an accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian. This will include:

- a) visual inspection of the premises,
- b) observing the general health of the herd,
- c) verifying compliance to all regional VHCP requirements,
- d) verifying reconciliation of the inventory,
- e) an inspection of the premises including the integrity of the perimeter fences (in Yukon, the inspection of the perimeter fences may also be performed by Conservation Officers or the program related staff of the Agriculture Branch),
- f) checking that the producer has been reporting deaths/escapes/intrusions properly,
- g) confirming whether the current site plan remains valid or if it requires updating.

19. Egress/Ingress Assessment

Verify if any farmed cervids have escaped the premises or any wild cervids have entered the premises. In all instances of egress or ingress, the herd is suspended pending an investigation following the policy outlined in Appendix D – Egress/Ingress Policy.

20. Program Advancement/Level Maintenance:

- a) The VHCP includes six levels, from the entry level (level E) to the highest level (certified). A minimum of five years (one year each at level E, D, C, B, A) is necessary for an enrolled herd to reach the certified level.
- b) Once a herd has reached the certified level, it maintains this level provided that

- the applicable requirements continue to be met
- c) If the Regional Administrator determines that the annual report is complete and the herd is advanced to the next level/maintained at current certified level.
 - d) Mail an advancement letter to the producer outlining the successful completion of the annual report and place a copy in the producer's file.
 - e) Report and make updates to the Yukon CWD website on a quarterly basis.

21. Incomplete or Unsatisfactory Application for Advancement:

- a) If information is incomplete or unsatisfactory, the Regional Administrator will inform the producer (via e-mail, conversation or voice mail) of the discrepancy within two weeks of processing the application.
- b) A written statement will be issued within two-business days if the method of communication was a phone call (either mailed or e-mail), which confirms the information required for advancement and states a 30-day deadline by which the producer must submit information. A copy of the statement will be placed into the producer file and the file flagged for follow up.
- c) If producer submits the requested information within the 30-day period, proceed with completing the advancement.
- d) If producer is willing to comply but needs additional time to complete requirements, the Regional Administrator may set a new deadline. If this new deadline is not met a suspension will be applied. The producer will be informed of this decision as in (a) and (b).
- e) If the producer does not respond within the deadline set in (b), the Regional Administrator will issue a suspension.
- f) If producer appeals the original judgment to withhold the advancement or the decisions made in (d) or (e), see Section 25 - Appeal Process and Appendix C – Appeal Process.

PROGRAM PROCEDURES

22. Suspension

A suspension will be applied if a herd is under review for potential removal from the program.

- a) The Regional Administrator will inform the producer (via e-mail, conversation or voice mail) of the reasons for applying a suspension and the deadline for complying with program requirements
- b) A written statement will be issued by mail to the producer within two-business day of the conversation, which confirms the conditions of the suspension. The written notice will include the name and address of the Regional Administrator. A copy of the statement will be placed into the producer file.
- c) A producer who is under a suspension will have the opportunity to submit any relevant information to the Regional Administrator within 30 days of the suspension being imposed.
- d) A producer who is under suspension will have the opportunity to appeal the decision within 30 days of the suspension.

e) If the producer does not respond as in 22 c) or d) the herd will be removed from the program (see Section 23 - Revoking Registration).

23. Revoking Registration (removal from the program)

- a) The Regional Administrator will notify the producer (via e-mail, conversation or voicemail) regarding the reasons for revoking the registration and the process of appealing.
- b) The Regional Administrator will notify the producer in writing (email or mail) of the same information as included in 23 a) and include the name and address of the Regional Administrator. A copy of the letter will be included in the producer file.
- c) The producer is allowed 30 days to appeal the decision of revocation (See Section 25 - Appeal Process).

24. Producer withdrawal from the CWD VHCP

If a producer wishes to withdraw from the program they must submit an email or letter stating that they wish to be removed from the program.

25. Appeal Process

Details and process description can be found under Appendix C: Appeal Process of Yukon CWD Voluntary Herd Certification Program. As per section 2.3 of the National Standards, a producer may appeal regarding the following points:

- a) a decision regarding advancement or downgrading,
- b) a suspension or a revocation of registration, but not both, or
- c) a decision made by the status assessor regarding conditions imposed before the herd is allowed to participate in the VHCP after a suspension or revocation.

26. Re-enrolling on the VHCP

A producer who has been removed from the program may submit a new application. The Status Assessor will determine if and at what level the herd should be re-enrolled based on the reasons for removal.

27. Changes to the National Standards

- a) CFIA is responsible for development and changes to the national standards
- b) The Regional Administrator will inform all enrolled producers of upcoming reviews and proposed changes for comment.
- c) The Regional Administrator will relay any producer comments regarding requested changes to the CFIA National Administrator.
- d) The Regional Administrator will provide hard copies or e-copies of approved changes to standards to all enrolled producers within 30-days of receipt of official revisions from CFIA.

28. Training

The Regional Administrator will develop a training program to teach the Status Assessor and program delivery personnel their roles and responsibilities. The training will be conducted by the Regional Administrator.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

National Administrator: This role and the associated responsibilities will be assumed by the CFIA in all situations. Through the use of a consultative process, the CFIA is responsible for the development of national standards for the VHCP, its audit and oversight, including the following:

- developing and setting the national VHCP standards in consultation with provincial/territorial governments and industry;
- undertaking a review of the National Standards of the VHCP to modify and update as required;
- providing the current National Standards (and any update directives) to the organizations responsible for regional administration;
- reviewing any CWD herd certification program proposed for a specific region of Canada and determine equivalency to the published VHCP National Standards;
- conducting audits of VHCP design and implementation to verify that the VHCP in a particular region of Canada meets the national standards;
- negotiating international recognition of the VHCP and endorsing export certification by the CFIA, which will only be done for those VHCP certifications in good standing, and judged by the CFIA to meet the national standards;
- designing and implementing a quality assurance program for non-CFIA laboratories performing transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) testing;
- ensuring the maintenance of a publicly accessible report (e.g. published on the CFIA website, or links to a status assessor's website) of all enrolled herds and their status. This report will be updated on a quarterly basis;
- performing all confirmatory testing on CWD-suspect or CWD-positive tissue samples at CFIA's National and OIE Laboratory for CWD. In the case of a confirmed positive cervid, the CFIA will implement an official disease control program; and
- reporting to the status assessor all premises quarantined for CWD by the CFIA when the quarantine is both applied and removed, and reporting all non-negative test results and ensuing confirmatory results.

Regional Administrator: This role and the associated responsibilities is performed by the Agrologist of the Yukon Agriculture Branch. The Regional Administrator is responsible for overseeing enrolment in the Yukon VHCP, including the following:

- developing a VHCP that meets the national standards, and outlining all policies and procedures of that regional VHCP in a set of standard operating procedures (SOP);

- developing and distributing an agreement (application form) for entry into the VHCP, which is signed by the owner/cervid farm operator and the accredited veterinarian. This agreement must include a statement protecting the CFIA from any liability arising from the regional VHCP;
- developing and distributing forms required for the VHCP, including application, inventory, and annual report forms. The producer's annual report form will include a statement or checkbox indicating that there are no significant changes to the cervid operation ;
- enrolling owners/cervid farm operators once they have met the requirements of the VHCP;
- collecting and collating all data on enrolled herds in that region;
- producing an inventory report, based on the previous year's inventory, and providing it to the appropriate program delivery person at least one month prior to the start of the anniversary quarter;
- upon request, issuing certificates indicating the status of a herd or the status of an individual cervid from that herd;
- informing the national administrator of the status of all enrolled herds on a quarterly basis;
- appointing and training status assessors and program delivery personnel. If a provincial/territorial program for accredited veterinarians is developed, it would need to be reviewed and approved by the CFIA;
- informing all enrolled owners/cervid farm operators, as well as staff of the regional administrator and status assessors, of any updates regarding the VHCP; and
- designing an appeal/review process for decisions made with respect to the VHCP that is in compliance with national standards.

Status Assessor: The role of assessor of herd status is performed by the Agrologist of Yukon Agriculture Branch. The Status Assessor is responsible for the following:

- receiving and reviewing completed applications for enrolment into the VHCP;
- accepting herds into the appropriate level of the VHCP or informing the owners/cervid farm operators or the responsible veterinarian of any outstanding requirements that prevent enrolment at that time;
- verifying the reconciliation of the herd inventories;
- approving all changes in status and posting the status publicly;
- investigating non-compliance with VHCP requirements, and suspending (and/or revoking) VHCP status when required;
- communicating suspension to the owner/cervid farm operator;

- investigating herds that are suspended and proceeding with reinstatement (at either the same or a lower level) or revocation of VHCP status;
- informing the regional administrator of the VHCP of changes in the status of a herd (additions, suspensions, revocations) as they occur; and
- implementing and conducting the appeal/review process;
- developing and implementing a protocol for the reporting and re-introduction of escaped farmed cervids. A decision on the disposition of the escaped cervid(s), when recovered, will depend on a risk assessment of the level of CWD found in wild cervids in the immediate area.

Program Delivery is carried out by veterinarians accredited by the CFIA for that purpose, by the Agrologist and Director of the Yukon Agriculture Branch, the Chief Veterinary Officer and program veterinarian of the Animal Health Unit and by Conservation officers of the Conservation Services Branch.

The Yukon Agriculture Branch is responsible for:

- reviewing the requirements of the program and responding to questions of the owner of premises applying for or enrolled in the program;
- assessing the actual facilities and structures (as indicated on the site plan) on premises proposed for enrolment in the VHCP, and verifying their compliance to program standards;;
- conducting a herd inventory;
- immediately notifying the CFIA of the existence of any cervid suspected of having CWD
- reconciling records to ensure that the herd meets the program requirements;
- signing and submitting reports, including the annual inventory to the status assessor.

The accredited veterinarian in the employ of the owner is responsible for:

- reviewing the requirements of the program and responding to questions of the owner of premises applying for or enrolled in the program
- verifying the accuracy of the site plan and noting any potential biosecurity concerns which may impact the CWD health of the herd;
- assessing the actual facilities and structures (as indicated on the site plan) on a premises proposed for enrolment in the VHCP, and verifying their compliance to program standards;
- teaching the owner to recognize the clinical signs of CWD, providing information on the epidemiology of the disease and herd management;
- conducting (or supervising) the herd inventory (including the physical inventory), and

- performing the annual inspection;
- assessing the health of the herd to determine whether any cervid is demonstrating signs of CWD;
- immediately notifying the CFIA of the existence of any cervid suspected of having CWD;
- collecting and submitting tissue samples from dead cervids or those that are destroyed, as may be requested
- verifying that all VHCP requirements are met, including verifying the reconciliation of the inventory
- checking records, signing any necessary reports, including initial VHCP application form and annual reports; and
- the AV also has the ability to sign and submit the annual inventory to the status assessor.

Approved third parties are approved by the regional administrator as eligible Program deliverers, and are trained and qualified to deliver certain aspects of the VHCP. Approved third parties include program related staff of the Yukon government Agriculture Branch, Animal Health Unit and Conservation Services Branch, or a CFIA veterinarian or inspector, or an animal health technician who is registered under the appropriate licensing body and supervised by an accredited veterinarian.

Approved third parties are trained, qualified and approved for:

- performing annual inventories—counting all cervids and recording at least one unique identifier for each cervid on a premises;
- performing physical inventories—counting all cervids and recording all identification devices. Any cervids showing signs of ill-health are identified to the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian for further examination;
- checking fences if required;

Owners/Operators

Owners/cervid farm operators have overall responsibility for program compliance and ensuring program delivery. Program delivery is carried out in collaboration with an accredited veterinarian or a Yukon official veterinarian, with or without approved third parties, with each having a particular role.

In this VHCP, an owner is an individual, partnership, company, corporation or other legal entity that has legal or rightful title to a cervid or a herd of cervids, regardless of any liens held on the cervid(s). A cervid farm operator is a person who is licensed under the Yukon *Game Farm Regulations* to operate a domestic cervid farm; this person may or may not be the owner.

Owners/cervid farm operators are persons who have responsibility for the daily care and handling of all cervids on a premises. Owners/cervid farm operators can apply for herd enrolment under the VHCP. Individuals who own or lease cervids but do not have responsibility for **all** cervids on the premises cannot apply for herd enrolment under the VHCP.

Owners/cervid farm operators are responsible for:

- submitting a site plan with the initial application, or within the first assessment year. The site plan will identify all structures and grazing areas on a premises to which the farmed cervids are given access, and that are used to store feed for cervids. The location of water sources, proximity to other farmed cervid herds and location of fences must also be included;
- procuring the services of an accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian, or trained and qualified territorial VHCP staff, with or without approved third parties to deliver the VHCP;
- identifying each cervid in the herd with at least two unique identification devices, one of which is an official device, and one of which can be read from a distance, before each cervid reaches the age of 12 months;
- maintaining fences that meet any applicable federal or territorial standards in a manner to prevent intrusion (ingress) or escape (egress) of cervids;
- providing the necessary facilities and assisting the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian or territorial VHCP staff with inspection and handling of cervids for inventories and annual inspections;
- reporting quarterly, to the status assessor, the death of any cervid(s) 12 months of age and older;
- submitting the appropriate tissue samples (head) for laboratory analysis, or presenting the head for sampling to a certified CWD sample collector, with the appropriate identification maintained *in situ*.
- ensuring that good-quality tissue samples are collected and submitted. The head or the sample should be chilled or frozen immediately;
- reporting immediately to the CFIA district veterinarian any cervid suspected of being clinically affected by CWD;
- reporting to the status assessor, Agriculture Branch and Conservation Services Branch any cervids that have escaped, disappeared or are otherwise missing from the premises as per the protocol outlined in the SOP;
- reporting immediately, or with reasonable promptness, to the status assessor, Agriculture Branch and Conservation Services Branch, the entry of any wild cervids into the premises;
- obtaining, maintaining and compiling all relevant documentation of cervid acquisitions, births, and departures;

- agreeing, with reasonable notice, to make the cervids and records available so that the accredited veterinarian, the Agriculture Branch and Conservation Services Branch, the regional administrator/status assessor and/or the CFIA can inspect them;
- storing feed in a manner that it is not accessible to wild cervids.
- sourcing water in a manner that it is not accessible to wild cervids.
- not accepting onto the premises carcasses or parts from wild cervids, or farmed cervids with lower or no status under a VHCP, for processing or taxidermy.
- ensuring that every third-party vehicle that transports farmed cervids, and every farm vehicle that is used to transport farmed cervids from other premises, is cleaned and/or disinfected (see definition) before loading cervids.
- if stocking a new herd on a new premises for the purpose of retaining a higher status, determining whether cervids have been contained on the premises in the past, and if so, determining if they were on the VHCP, and at what level.

Any changes to the operation/premises, including the accredited veterinarian, must be reported to the regional administrator and/or status assessor. Documentation must be included in the owner/cervid farm operator's registration file.

Appendix B

CONDITION OF SUBMISSION SAMPLE, RESULTS and EXEMPTIONS

(1.) Where a head is presented to an accredited veterinarian and there is no brain present to forward for testing, the accredited veterinarian will provide the owner with a letter certifying that the head was 'submitted' and no brain tissue was present to test.

The specimen must be submitted to a recognized laboratory for the Bio-Rad TeSeE assay and must following the methodology approved by the CFIA at the time of the test. All suspect test results will be confirmed by a CFIA laboratory and the CFIA will be responsible for reporting the results to the owner.

Removal of the brain removed by anyone other than an accredited veterinarian or provincial laboratory will not be counted as submitted.

(2.) Sampling and Tissue Collection

Both the obex and the retropharyngeal lymph nodes (RPLN) must be submitted for all

farmed cervids tested for CWD.

The primary target tissue tested for all members of the family Cervidae (with the exception of members of the genus *Odocoileus*), such as elk, red deer, reindeer, sika deer, and fallow deer, is the obex of the medulla.

The primary target tissue tested for *Odocoileus* species (including white-tailed deer and mule deer) is the RPLN.

The additional submitted tissues will be frozen and held by the laboratory until the initial test is completed.

If moribund cervids are humanely destroyed on farm by a gunshot to the head, the recipient laboratory must sample and test for CWD, both the whole brain and one lymph node from the head (mandibular or retropharyngeal) or, if no lymph node is available, the whole brain and one tonsil.

The standard screening test for the CWD VHCP is currently the Bio-Rad ELISA, and reporting should reflect this.

(3.) **Handling the Specimen**

In removing the head from the body all the flesh including the spinal cord, should be cut cleanly 15 cm (6 inches) from the head. The spinal cord cannot be pulled or stretched, as it may damage the obex so that it is not possible to test the brain in the proper manner.

Brains in which the obex of the medulla is not present will not be accepted as testable. The most likely reason for the failure to have an obex is killing the cervid with a bullet in such a way as to destroy the obex. Owners should obtain specific instruction from their veterinarian or association as to how to shoot a cervid without destroying the obex. The head must be cooled immediately and if it is not possible to submit it immediately to the accredited veterinarian, the head should be frozen and not allowed to thaw until it reaches the recognized laboratory. This will allow testing of cervids that might not be suitable otherwise.

No matter what condition the head is in it must be submitted to the recognized laboratory.

(4.) **Condition of Specimens**

Brains that are submitted to recognized laboratories in putrefied condition may not be acceptable for normal testing. If the carcass has deteriorated sufficiently, brain tissue may not be able to be found and no test is possible.

The protein that is associated with CWD appears first in elk in an area of the brain called the 'obex of the medulla'. That very specific location must be identified by the laboratory doing the test, in order to detect cervids that are in the earliest stages of the disease. In the final stages of CWD, the protein can be found in most parts of the brain.

When the correct area to test cannot be found, the ability to determine whether the cervid was infected is greatly reduced. The normal test of the brain of a cervid for CWD will identify animals which are in the early stages of the disease perhaps as long as one year before any signs of the disease are detectable. The test requires that the brain of the cervid be in good physical shape so that the anatomy of the brain can be used to identify the very specific area of the brain that is required to be identified so that the earliest stages of CWD can be seen. The most common reason for not being able to perform such a test is deterioration of the brain from heat.

When the cervid is in the final stages of CWD, the prion is identifiable throughout the brain and the test can be done on any part of the brain that can be found. Testing using this material will not identify cervids in the early stages of the disease. However, it will identify the cervids that are most likely to transmit CWD to other cervids. Ensuring that all cervids are tested to this standard will minimize the chances that a cervid in the herd has transmitted CWD to other cervids.

If the brain is damaged severely enough, the laboratory or accredited veterinarian may not be able to find brain tissues to test. Cervids submitted to the recognised laboratory where brain tissue cannot be identified are not considered to have been tested.

(5.) Results of Analysis on Cervids submitted for CWD Testing.

- a.) The standard screening test for the CWD VHCP is currently the Bio-Rad ELISA, and reporting should reflect this.
- b.) The results of analysis for CWD should be reported as follows:
 - i. **Tested: CWD not detected** (Where the specimen submitted contained the correct target tissue for the species being tested.) The sample should be reported as follows: "Bio-Rad ELISA was negative for disease specific PrP (PrP^{CWD}). Based on the tissue available for testing, this animal was unlikely to have died from CWD."
 - ii. **Tested: CWD not detected in secondary target tissue** (Where the specimen submitted did not contain the primary target tissue identified for the species being tested.) The sample should be reported as follows: "Bio-Rad ELISA was negative for disease specific PrP (PrP^{CWD}). Based on the tissue available for testing, this animal was unlikely to have died from CWD."

This may include the following:

- samples from white-tailed and mule deer where the RPLN was not submitted but obex and/or brain is available for testing;
- samples from elk where the obex was not submitted but the RPLN or another area of the brain is available for testing

iii. Submitted: Unsuitable for testing (Where the specimen submitted did not have identifiable brain or RPLN tissue available for testing, and a report for analysis is completed.) The sample should be reported as “Submitted: Unsuitable for testing.” This should be followed with an explanation as to the cause for this result.

This may include the following:

- samples where tissues other than brain/obex or RPLN are received;
- samples where a skull/head is submitted but no testable tissues are present.

Note: For the purposes of testing under the CWD VHCP, samples being reported as “Tested: CWD not detected” will be considered as “tested” when the herd is assessed for advancement within the program.

Samples being reported as “Tested: CWD not detected in secondary target tissue” will be considered as suitable when a herd is assessed for advancement within the VHCP if it happens only sporadically. If primary target tissue is missed repeatedly, a follow-up of the details of the individual situation will be undertaken by the status assessor. If negligence on the part of the producer is identified as the cause, or this occurrence is repeated, then the VHCP’s requirements are considered to have not been met and the herd is to be suspended.

(6.) Exemption from Submission of Heads.

The status assessor should consider the following as automatic exemptions from the requirement to submit, unless the status assessor suspects that the conditions set out were not met or that the exemption is being abused to the detriment of the VHCP

- Destruction of cervids (including stored heads/samples) by fire: a certificate or letter from an appropriate official must accompany the annual report.
- The destruction or carrying away of the head of a cervid by a predator: a certificate or letter from an appropriate wildlife officer or other government official responsible for investigating such incidents must accompany the annual report.
- Theft: a report from the police officer who investigates the theft must accompany the annual report.
- Loss or destruction of the head/tissue sample that is no longer in the control of the owner/cervid farm operator (e.g. by an accredited veterinarian, courier or laboratory).

Recognized laboratories should note on reception of the specimen that the obex, RPLN or other appropriate tissue samples are not present and the reason why. A letter setting out the details of the loss of the sample by the individual responsible must accompany the annual report.

- Any other reason (such as a flood), over which the owner/cervid farm operator could not reasonably be expected to have control that results in the destruction or disappearance of the head/tissue sample: a letter or report by an acceptable third party that sets out the details of the reason for failure to submit the sample must accompany the annual report. The status assessor may accept a picture (when available) of the cervid's head that clearly shows the identification device(s), preferably still *in situ*.

Carcasses or parts of carcasses of cervids tested for CWD must be held pending test results, and for that reason, arrangements must be made with the slaughterhouse before sending animals. The owners should consult with those responsible for inspection of the meat while making arrangements.

Appendix C

APPEAL PROCESS

At the request of the owner, the status assessor will implement the appeals/review process and will appoint an appeals review committee of three to consider all submitted appeals. The committee will consider all appeals and provide the status assessor with a recommendation as to whether the appellant has met the criteria and whether the appeal should be accepted. A representative for the status assessor will be the non-voting chairman of the committee. A representative of the Yukon Game Growers Association may assist the committee by providing information relating to the cervid industry. It is required that a representative of the CFIA will observe the appeal hearing as a non-voting member of the committee.

Each of the three individuals appointed as committee members will each represent one of the following groups:

- A. a licenced Yukon veterinarian;
- B. the Chief Veterinary Officer or representative of the Animal Health Unit of Yukon government;

- C. a representative of the Wildlife Branch of Yukon government;
- G. a professional employee of a college or university who is familiar with the cervid industry;
- H. a producer representative of the small ruminant industry and currently enrolled in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP); or
- I. a representative of the status assessor from another Canadian regional VHCP.

After review and consideration of the appeal/review committee's recommendations, the status assessor makes the final decision regarding the appeal. Where the status assessor believes the recommendation of the appeals review committee would jeopardize the integrity of the VHCP, the status assessor may convene a further committee consisting of the CFIA Veterinary Program Specialist responsible for CWD or a delegate, and two provincial/territorial government veterinarians from provinces/territories where the government is responsible for the VHCP.

The committee will recommend an exemption from the requirement to submit a specimen to the status assessor where, in spite of an appropriate management system, some unusual occurrence has caused the owner not to be able to submit a specimen. The committee, in considering the appeal, is considering the reason for the failure to test the specific specimen. The committee is not determining the overall risk of the herd having CWD.

Requests for appeal must be made in writing by the owner/cervid farm operator to the status assessor, and set out the reasons why the appeal should be considered. Where there is specific information concerning the circumstances surrounding the death of the cervid or an incident in the herd, the request shall be countersigned by the practising veterinarian responsible for the herd. The committee may consider requests for exemption in written form and need not meet in person.

Where the status assessor believes that the recommendation of the committee would jeopardize the status of the certified herd program, the status assessor may convene a further committee consisting of a representative of the CFIA national animal health program and two other provincial veterinarians from provinces where the government is responsible for the program. A representative of the national cervid organisation will be an ex-officio member of the committee.

Appendix D

EGRESS/INGRESS POLICY

This policy provides guidance on the basic considerations and minimum standards for decision-making in instances of cervid egress or ingress in relation to game farm

operations that are taking part in the VHCP. This policy is intended only for use with game farmed elk on game farms that are participating in Yukon's VHCP.

Cervids are considered to include all native or introduced species of elk, moose, caribou, reindeer, mule deer, or white tailed deer that could be potential vectors of CWD.

EGRESS (ESCAPE) SITUATIONS

1. When an elk from the VHCP herd has escaped from its enclosure, but has not left the fenced property nor come into contact with wild cervids, there will be NO change or downgrade to the certification status of the VHCP herd if it has been returned within 24 hours.
2. When an elk from the VHCP herd has escaped from its enclosure and has left the fenced property, it is not to be returned to the herd. If it has been kept separate from the farmed herd and herd enclosure, and terminated for CWD testing, then the certification level of the herd will NOT be changed or downgraded.
3. When an elk from the VHCP herd has escaped from its enclosure and has left the fenced property
 - a) Outside of the rut season:
 - If the elk has been returned to its enclosure within 24 hours, the certification level of the herd will be downgraded by 1 status level.
 - If between 24 and 48 hours, the herd will be downgraded by 2 status levels.
 - If greater than 48 hours, the herd will be downgraded by 3 status levels.
 - b) During the rut season,
 - If the elk has been returned to its enclosure within 24 hours, the certification level of the herd will be downgraded by 3 status levels.
 - If the elk has been returned to its enclosure after 24 hours, and the incident took place during rut season, the certification level of the herd will be downgraded to status level E.
4. When an elk from the VHCP herd has escaped from its enclosure, has left the fenced property and has never returned, it will be considered a "missed sample", and will be assessed based on the criteria in section 21 and Appendix E of this SOP.

INGRESS (INTRUSION) SITUATIONS

1. In instances where the ingressed cervid has made contact with the farmed elk and has been terminated within 24 hours and tested for CWD, the herd will be temporarily suspended from the VHCP to await for test results.

- a) If the sample tests negative for CWD then the certification level of the farmed VHCP herd will not be impacted or downgraded.
- b) If the sample tests positive for CWD, the herd will be suspended pending the outcome of a CFIA investigation.
2. In instances where the ingressed cervid has made contact with the farmed elk, and then escaped leaving no opportunity for CWD testing, then the farmed herd will be downgraded by two status levels.
3. If the wild cervid has entered the farm property but has been confirmed to have not entered the same fenced enclosure as the farmed elk, or accessed the same food or water sources for those elk, then there will be no impact to the certification level of the VHCP herd.
4. If the ingressed cervid is kept with the farmed elk herd, then that herd will be lose its certification and be revoked from the VHCP.

OTHER DECISION RELATED POINTS

In both egress and ingress situations, decisions on more complex scenarios would be made jointly by at least 3 or more of the following list:

- the regional administrator,
- the director of the Agriculture Branch of Yukon government,
- the Chief Veterinary Office or representative of the Animal Health Unit of Yukon government,
- a program related member of the Conservation Officer Services Branch of Yukon government,
- the Yukon Accredited Veterinarian, or
- a past or present RA or SA from another region.

A Conservation Officer should be involved in any situation where a decision has been made that requires a wild cervid to be terminated.

Appendix E

MISSING SAMPLES POLICY

This policy is intended to define the basic considerations and minimum standards for decision-making in instances of missed or missing laboratory samples or results occurring when the annual reconciling of previous and current herd inventories are

being performed for game farm operations that are enrolled in the Yukon government VHCP.

The Yukon program requires that samples from all cervids 12 months of age and older that die, are humanely euthanized, or are slaughtered for meat are required to have been tested for CWD at a CFIA-approved TSE Network Laboratory approved to test samples for the CWD VHCP. As outlined in Section 13 of the Yukon SOP, the presence of suitable results needs to be verified for the VHCP elk.

- A) When records are being reconciled for a Yukon VHCP herd and it is determined that there is a missing laboratory result for any of the elk 12 months of age and older that had died, was euthanized, or slaughtered, the following options must be considered:
1. If the laboratory results from submitted samples are not yet available, verify a submission form has been submitted. Within 30 days, verify the producer has provided the test result(s) associated with the submission form.
 2. If a required sample is missed, an owner/cervid farm operator at levels E–A has the option to sacrifice two other adult cervids (12 months of age and older) from the herd for every sample that is missed in order to meet requirements to advance. The sacrificed cervids must be a similar cohort to the sample that was missed.
 3. An owner/cervid farm operator at the certified level has the option to sacrifice one other adult cervid (12 months of age and older) from the herd for every sample that is missed in order to meet the requirements to maintain certified level. The sacrificed cervids must be a similar cohort to the sample that was missed.
 4. Where required samples are missed, and the farm operator chooses NOT to sacrifice adult cervids as in 2 or 3 above, a status penalty will be assessed as follows:
 - a. If a single required sample is missed and no sacrifices are made, the farm status will be downgraded by 1 level.
 - b. If more than one sample and up to 50% (rounded up to the nearest whole number) of required samples are missed and sacrifices are not made in compensation, the farm status will be downgraded by 2 levels.
 - c. If more than 50% (rounded up to the nearest whole number) of required samples are missed and sacrifices are not made in compensation, the farm status will be downgraded by 3 levels.
- B) There may be exemptions from testing as per the conditions stated under Appendix B section 6.
- C) Owners/cervid farm operators are responsible for ensuring that the tissue samples are of good quality, and that all required samples and identification are submitted. If an unsuitable

specimen is received (see National Standards Section 4.2.5), the receiving laboratory is to notify the status assessor, the owner/cervid farm operator and either accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or territorial VHCP staff responsible for the herd, with a follow-up of the details of each unsuitable sample. More than two unsuitable samples could lead to the herd's suspension, assessed by the SA. Sacrifices cannot be used to overcome the repeated submission of poor quality samples.