



# CWD MANAGEMENT



Dear Montana Taxidermist,

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks needs your help in managing and monitoring chronic wasting disease (CWD). As you know, CWD is a fatal disease of deer, elk, and moose that was first found in wild deer in Montana in 2017. We now know the disease is present across much of the state, and for the 2023 hunting season, FWP will be conducting surveillance and monitoring in Priority Surveillance Areas in north-central, southwestern, south-central, and eastern Montana.

Adult mule deer bucks are among the highest priority animals for testing, and they are among the animals most likely to be received by taxidermists. Lymph nodes collected from the head under the jaw are the preferred tissue for testing and can usually be collected after the taxidermist's work is completed.

## How you can help

1. Please notify hunters that FWP is interested in sampling and testing adult deer, elk, and moose harvested from any of our sampling areas (see map). You can encourage them to take their harvested animal to a CWD sample collection location or a regional office so FWP can collect samples for our CWD surveillance after the taxidermist's work is complete.
2. If hunters harvest an animal outside of these areas, they may still submit their own samples for testing free of charge, by mailing them to the Wildlife Health Lab (instructions are online at [fwp.mt.gov/cwd](http://fwp.mt.gov/cwd)).
3. If you are interested in learning how to collect the correct lymph nodes and obex samples as a service you can offer your clients, a video explaining how to collect the samples can be found online at [fwp.mt.gov/cwd](http://fwp.mt.gov/cwd).

**CWD Best Practices** – CWD “prions” are the infectious agent for CWD and are extremely resistant to conventional disinfecting techniques (e.g. soap, boiling water, etc.). These mis-shaped proteins are found throughout the body of an infected animal but are most concentrated in the brain, spinal cord, and lymph nodes. We recommend taxidermists wear rubber gloves and eye protection when working with wild game, especially when handling the brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, and lymph nodes of harvested animals. We also recommend disinfecting instruments and work surfaces with a 40% solution of bleach for 5 minutes after the taxidermist's work is complete. All carcass waste (tissue, bone, etc.) must be disposed of in a Class II landfill (see map/list of landfills on FWP website: [fwp.mt.gov/cwd](http://fwp.mt.gov/cwd)) to prevent the accidental spread of CWD.

If left unmanaged, CWD will spread. As infection rates increase, it could significantly impact our wildlife and those that hunt them, and your business as well. Thank you for your help as we fight CWD together. For more information, please contact your local FWP office or visit [fwp.mt.gov/cwd](http://fwp.mt.gov/cwd).

Sincerely,

Jennifer Ramsey, Wildlife Veterinarian  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

