

# **MANITOBA CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE**

## **Final Summary Report of Initial Incident Response Action**

Manitoba announced its first confirmed positive case of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the province on November 1, 2021, in a symptomatic mule deer buck found west of Lake of the Prairies in Game Hunting Area (GHA) 22. In response to finding CWD for the first time in the province, Manitoba enhanced surveillance and implemented evidence-based CWD control measures with the objectives to better understand the level and current distribution of CWD, prevent spread to other areas of the province, and eradicate the disease from the area.

### **I. SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES**

Recent management actions taken in the area surrounding the initial CWD finding were successful in supporting these objectives. The following outcomes from these actions will serve to reduce transmission in the local area and inform future CWD response actions for this and other areas of the province:

- Provided scientific evidence that will be used to focus future CWD management actions in the ongoing effort to eradicate CWD from the area;
- Significantly reduced the local deer population, reducing CWD transmission risk and supporting eradication of the disease in the area;
- Provided evidence that CWD is not widespread in the local deer population and highly unlikely to be in the white-tailed deer population in the area;
- Removed CWD positive animals from the area to prevent ongoing environmental contamination and animal-animal transmission from these animals;
- Identified the number and location of remaining high-risk deer;
- Provided information on cervid numbers and movement in the region,
- Facilitated salvaging as much meat as possible, and;
- Provided information on how to improve future CWD incident response actions.

Combining all management actions, a total of 635 deer were removed from the local area which significantly reduced the local deer population and the risk of CWD transmission. A total of 558 deer were sampled and laboratory results confirmed 2 additional mule deer bucks tested positive for CWD.

Preliminary results suggest that CWD has only recently come into the area and is not widespread. The low overall number of CWD positive cases discovered during these management actions is encouraging.

### **II. LOCAL COMMUNITY DEER HUNTING OPPORTUNITY**

Immediately following the initial discovery of CWD, the department closed all cervid hunting in a small portion of GHA 22 (Figure 1) around the CWD finding to reduce the risk that hunters might spread the disease via carcass movement. The closure provided the province time to inform the public about finding CWD in the area and provide additional CWD information to hunters.

From November 25 – December 12, a permit-based local community deer hunting opportunity was offered within the closed area. This controlled hunting opportunity was for local landowners, their families, and local Indigenous communities that actively hunt in the area. All hunters who were eligible to harvest deer had to abide by various permit conditions, including

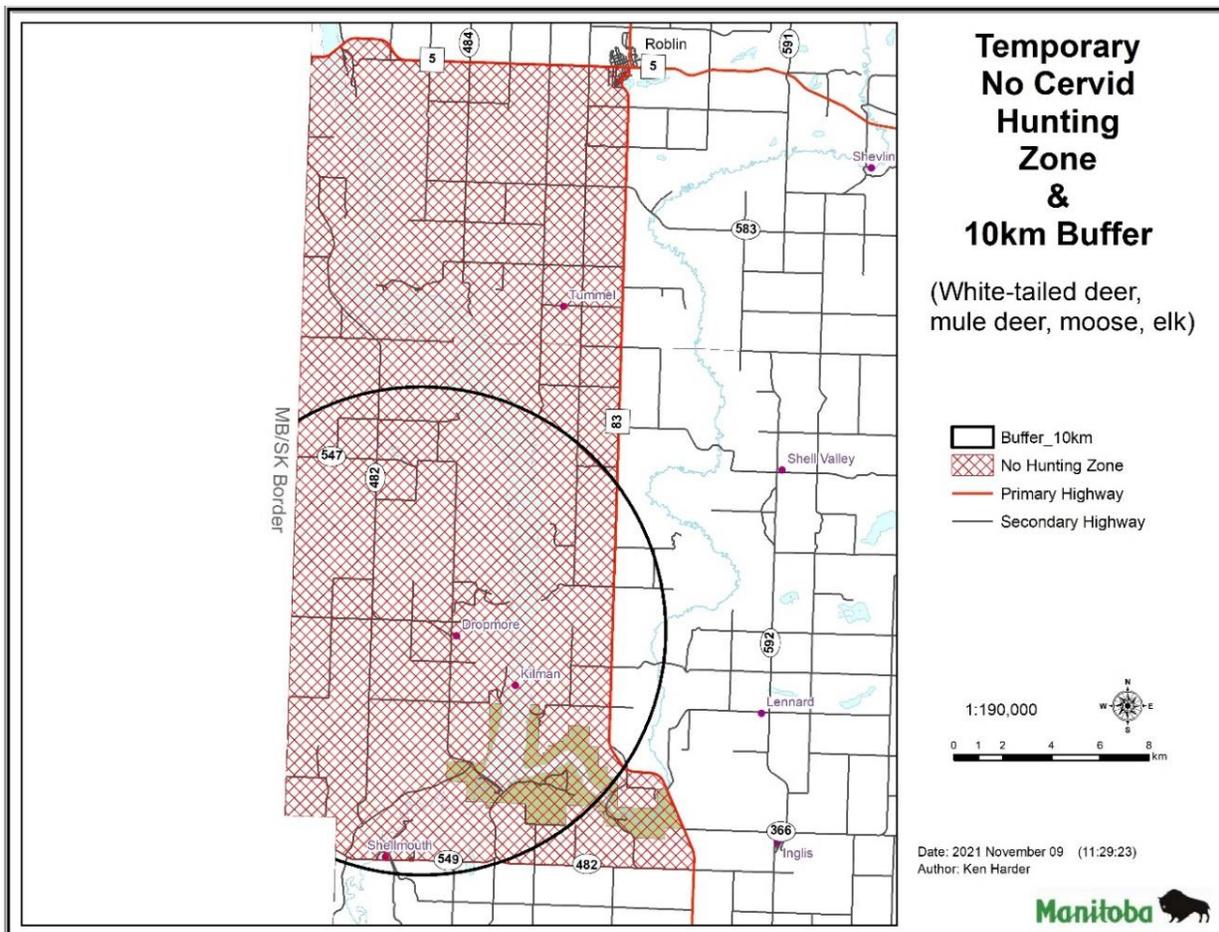
bringing all animals harvested to a hunter check station in Roblin where samples collected for CWD testing. This local opportunity allowed for some deer harvest in the area and contributed CWD test samples while controlling the movement of carcasses and high-risk material to other areas of the province. Hunting of moose and elk remained prohibited in the closed area.

A total of 156 white-tailed deer kill permits and 152 mule deer kill permits were provided to hunters over the course of the opportunity, with each permit granting the authority to harvest up to three deer for a total allowable harvest of 468 white-tailed deer and 456 mule deer. During the 18 days this opportunity was offered, hunters brought 113 white-tailed deer and 19 mule deer to the hunter check station and samples were collected from all 132 deer for CWD testing (Table 1).

Lab results confirmed that 2 male mule deer harvested as part of this management action tested positive for CWD. Both hunters were immediately notified and the animals collected for proper disposal. The remaining 130 animals harvested during this opportunity tested negative for CWD and results were made available to the hunters.

All hunters that harvested animals during this opportunity are reminded that only meat and properly handled hide and antlers can be moved out of the hunting area.

**Figure 1.** Temporary no cervid hunting zone and 10 km buffer around initial CWD finding.



**Table 1.** Results from the November 25 - December 12 local deer hunting opportunity.

SPECIES	# Deer Harvested			# Tested for CWD	# Tested CWD Positive
	Male	Female	Total		
White-tailed Deer	91	22	113	113	0
Mule Deer	13	6	19	19	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	104	28	132	132	2

### III. LOCALIZED AERIAL DEER DEPOPULATION

Based on the current understanding of CWD, and best management actions supported by science, experts and the experience of other jurisdictions, the department took steps to significantly reduce local deer populations in the immediate area around the CWD finding. Intensive and timely deer reduction measures have been shown as the most effective measure to control CWD by reducing animal-to-animal transmission, as well as transmission through environmental contamination. Elk and moose, species that are less likely to contract CWD in the early stages of an outbreak, were not included.

The localized aerial deer depopulation took place from December 13 – 17 within a 10-km buffer radius from the initial CWD finding (Figure 1) on Crown land and private land where access was granted. The department had access to approximately 75% of the target area and did not remove animals on areas without access permission. The aerial work was completed by an experienced aerial contractor with certified and skilled aerial marksmen. Department staff supervised the aerial work and conducted all ground work.

All high quality meat deemed suitable for human consumption was salvaged for distribution pending the results of CWD testing. High-risk material was contained on the processing site and disposed of in a landfill approved to accept this type of material, where it was buried and capped.

A total of 503 deer were removed from all across the area and CWD test samples collected from all testable deer (Table 2). Lab testing did not detect CWD in any of the submitted samples.

Meat, salvaged from approximately 67% of testable animals, was made available on a priority basis to Indigenous communities, beginning with communities affected by hunting closures and also to local landowners upon request. Approximately 6000-7000lbs pounds of meat has been distributed through this initiative.

**Table 2.** Results from the December 13-17 localized aerial deer depopulation.

SPECIES	# Deer Removed			# Tested for CWD	# Tested CWD Positive	Meat Salvaged
	Male	Female	Total			
White-tailed Deer	134	361	495	420	0	284
Mule Deer	2	6	8	6	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	136	367	503	426	0	287

### IV. NEXT STEPS

An aerial deer population survey of the depopulation area was recently completed. The results are being reviewed to assess current cervid distribution and especially to identify the number and location of remaining high risk deer in the area. Information gathered from this survey and the results of recent management actions will guide future CWD control measures in this area

and elsewhere in the province. The department has also removed the prohibition on cervid hunting in the closure area of GHA 22 as it is no longer required.

Based on a review of recent management actions, aerial population survey results and an ongoing review of mule deer management in Manitoba, additional sampling of mule deer in areas where CWD has been detected is being pursued.

Continued cooperation with local landowners, Indigenous communities, licenced hunters and key stakeholders will be critical in ongoing management, detection and surveillance of CWD. The department will also continue to maintain ongoing dialogue with wildlife management partners within Saskatchewan, Alberta, and other jurisdictions.

The department will continue to provide CWD-related information and updates and looks forward to future opportunities to work together again in the ongoing battle to protect Manitoba's cervid population from CWD.