

2022-23 Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program Results

The Government of Saskatchewan received 2,241 submissions to the chronic wasting disease (CWD) hunter surveillance program during the 2022-23 hunting season. The program detected 473 positive cases, including:

- 331 mule deer;
- 135 white-tailed deer;
- four elk; and
- three moose.

The disease was detected in one new wildlife management zone (WMZ) in the southern boreal region (WMZ 68N). The detection of CWD in this area raises concerns about the potential for disease transmission and impact on cervid species in the boreal forest. CWD is considered endemic across southern Saskatchewan, south of the boreal forest.

The South Saskatchewan River Valley has some of the highest CWD prevalence rates in the world. Mule deer in this area have prevalence rates ranging up to 77 per cent (+/- 12 per cent) in males and 55 per cent (+/- 18 per cent) in females. In the same area, white-tailed deer have prevalence rates of 25 per cent (+/- 7 per cent) in males and 17 per cent (+/- 15 per cent) in females. Recent survey data suggests that mule deer populations in the South Saskatchewan River Valley are declining, and CWD is likely a contributing factor.

Four of the seven CWD cases in moose and elk occurred in areas of the province where CWD is highly prevalent in deer populations. The remaining three cases occurred in the southern boreal region. Further testing is needed to understand the epidemiology of the disease in Saskatchewan moose and elk populations.

The CWD hunter surveillance program received 34 per cent fewer submissions in 2022-23 than previous years. In 2021-22, hunters submitted 3,374 samples (644 positive cases). The decrease in submissions to the program is likely related to the lower number of cervid hunting licenses sold during the 2022 hunting season.

Hunter submissions are necessary to estimate accurate CWD prevalence rates across the province. Understanding the spread and prevalence of the disease is critical for making informed management decisions; therefore, we strongly encourage hunters to submit their animals for testing next year.

For more information about CWD, including how to submit your animal for testing, visit saskatchewan.ca/cwd.

Thank you to all hunters who participated in the CWD surveillance program

The Ministry of Environment has been monitoring CWD in the province since 1997, when the disease was first detected in a captive elk farm. CWD prevalence rates (the proportion of animals affected) in mule and white-tailed deer populations have increased since the detection of the disease in the wild, more than 20 years ago.

2022-23 CWD Surveillance Program Positive Test Results

