

2024-25 Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Program Results

The Government of Saskatchewan received 2,258 submissions to the chronic wasting disease (CWD) hunter surveillance program during the 2024-25 hunting season. The program detected 386 positive cases, including:

- 259 mule deer;
- 113 white-tailed deer;
- 12 elk; and
- two moose.

The disease was detected through the hunter surveillance program in one new wildlife management zone (WMZ): Prince Albert Wildlife Management Zone (PWMZ). One CWD-positive white-tailed deer was harvested in this zone. Previous lack of CWD detection in this zone was likely due to small sample size rather than the absence of CWD, as CWD is known to be present in adjacent zones. 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 North America. Mule deer in this area have prevalence rates ranging up to 92 per cent (+/- 11 per cent) in males and 62 per cent (+/- 19 per cent) in females. In the same area, white-tailed deer have prevalence rates up to 37 per cent (+/- 18 per cent) in males and 9 per cent (+/- 17 per cent) in females. Recent survey data suggests that mule deer populations in the South Saskatchewan River Valley have declined, and CWD is likely a contributing factor.

All 14 of the CWD positive cases in moose and elk occurred in areas of the province where CWD is highly prevalent in deer populations. Cases of CWD in moose

appear to be sporadic and associated with spillover from infected deer. Further testing is needed to understand the epidemiology of the disease in Saskatchewan moose and elk populations.

The CWD hunter surveillance program received 10 per cent fewer submissions in 2024-25 than previous years. In 2023-24, hunters submitted 2,294 samples (525 positive cases). Samples from mule deer and white-tailed deer decreased by 38 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively. Samples from elk increased by 277 per cent, due to the introduction of mandatory surveillance in WMZ 37 and 48, following the detection of bovine TB in cattle during the 2024-25 hunting season. The overall decrease in submissions to the program may be related to the lower number of cervid hunting licenses sold during the 2023 hunting season.

Hunter submissions are necessary to estimate accurate CWD prevalence rates across the province.

Understanding the spread and prevalence of the disease in wildlife populations is critical for making informed management decisions. Hunters play an important role in informing wildlife management by submitting their animals for testing.

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 initial detection of the disease in the wild over 20 years ago.

2024-25 CWD Surveillance Program

Positive Test Results

