CWD
CHRONIC — WASTING — DISEASE

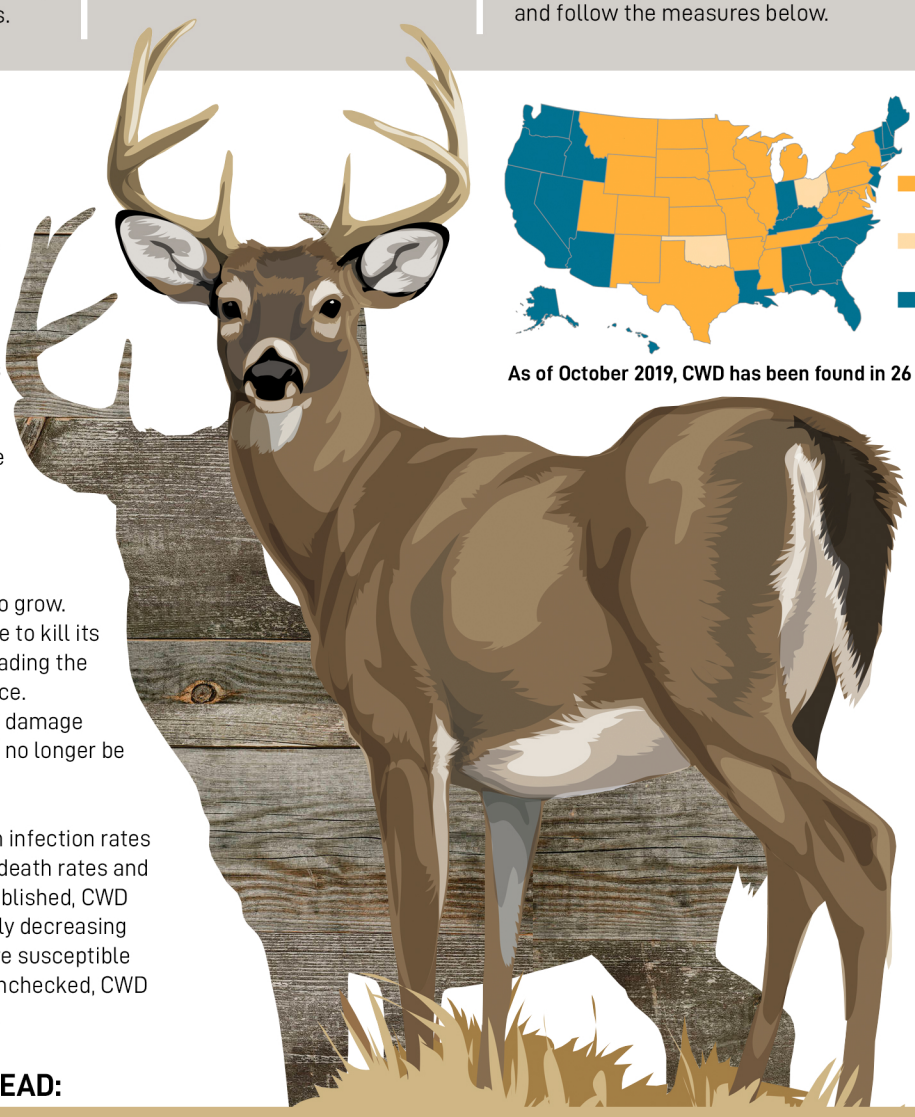
ARCHERY TRADE ASSOCIATION | NDA NATIONAL DEER ALLIANCE | CWD ALLIANCE

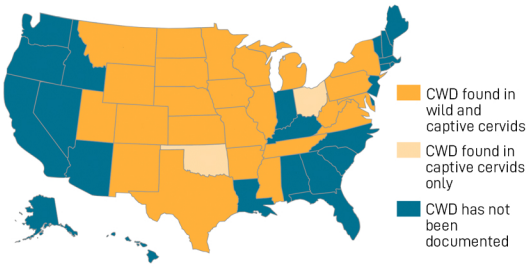
Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is an odd neurological disease that affects deer, elk, moose, and other cervids. It's not caused by things we usually associate with diseases like viruses or bacteria. Instead, it is caused by misshapen prion proteins that cause normal prion proteins in an animal's body to change their shape into the abnormal form. Once changed, these proteins begin damaging, rather than helping, the infected animal's brain, and continue to do so until the animal dies.

CWD is spread directly from animal to animal by way of saliva, feces, and carcass parts. These fluids and tissues can also contaminate the environment with CWD prions that can persist for several years and spread to other animals when they ingest soil, water, or plants containing the infectious prions.

There is no treatment for CWD. One of the unique characteristics of all prion diseases is that they are 100% fatal. They cannot be treated with medications or prevented by vaccinations.

It's not likely you can get CWD. The Center for Disease Control has investigated neurological diseases of humans in areas where the CWD infection rate is high in wild deer and has found no evidence of CWD transmission to humans. But that doesn't mean it can't happen. Avoid the possibility and follow the measures below.





As of October 2019, CWD has been found in 26 U.S. states.

What does CWD do to animals it infects?
CWD is 100% fatal to any animal affected by it. Most of the time, animals with CWD show no visible, outward symptoms of the disease for all but the last few weeks or months of the disease's cycle, which can take more than two years. So, unfortunately, most infected animals are virtually impossible to distinguish from healthy, noninfected animals.

Will CWD wipe out deer or elk?
It hasn't yet, but the concern continues to grow. The disease often takes two years or more to kill its host, so the infected animal is likely spreading the disease and still has a chance to reproduce. Therefore, it takes a long time for CWD to damage an entire herd to the point where it might no longer be sustainable.

What scientists know for sure is that high infection rates make for a weak, sick herd that has high death rates and low birth rates. Once introduced and established, CWD continues to spread in a herd, dramatically decreasing the health of that herd and making it more susceptible to other diseases and conditions. If left unchecked, CWD may ultimately cause the herd to die out.

STAY SAFE AND PREVENT SPREAD:

- Don't consume any animals that look sick or are known to be infected with CWD.
- Wear latex gloves when handling potentially infected cervid carcasses and avoid cutting into the brain or spinal column when you're field dressing or processing an animal.
- Don't transfer live animals or carcass parts from areas where CWD has been found.
- Don't feed, bait or do anything that will cause deer, elk or moose to congregate.
- If you're hunting in a state with CWD, you should get your animal tested. Contact your state wildlife agency for instructions.