



NCWRC

Testing Drop-off Station Frequently Asked Questions

As of March 31, 2022, North Carolina has a confirmed case of Chronic Wasting Disease from a deer in Yadkin County. For updates, please visit ncwildlife.org/cwd

Why is the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) collecting deer heads from hunters?

Reliable detection of CWD requires diagnostic testing of the lymph nodes found in an animal's head and neck; there is no recommended CWD test for live deer.

CWD-infected deer can appear healthy and spread the disease to other deer for 16 months or longer before they begin to show notable symptoms. For this reason, finding CWD on the landscape requires testing healthy-looking as well as obviously sick deer.

For many years, the agency relied on tissue samples from road-killed deer and those provided by hunters in addition to investigating sick deer reported by the public. Previously, hunters were only able to donate samples from their deer when NCWRC field staff were present. The drop-off freezers provide a convenient way for hunters to donate samples that will help the NCWRC find CWD if it is present in an area.

What else is the NCWRC doing about CWD?

In addition to robust sampling for CWD statewide, the NCWRC has adopted several rules intended to limit the spread of CWD in North Carolina; most notably a ban on the importation of whole carcass or high risk carcass parts of any cervid (deer, elk, moose, caribou/reindeer) harvested in another state. The agency has developed a CWD Response Plan that will be activated in the event of a CWD-positive detection. The agency routinely communicates with disease specialists and other agencies to better understand impacts of the disease and strategies to best monitor and manage the spread of the disease over time.

Which deer should be sent in for testing?

Hunters can donate samples from bucks and does of any age. While older bucks are slightly more likely to test positive for CWD, testing deer from all age and sex classes increases our ability to find CWD if and wherever it is present.

When should I drop off my deer head?

Freezers should be available throughout the deer season so you can drop off your deer head when it is most convenient to you. However, some drop-off freezers might not have 24-hour access throughout the week. See interactive map on ncwildlife.org/CWD.

Do you still want the deer head if I can't remove the antlers?

Yes, you may still leave your deer head if you're not able to remove the antlers. However, removing the antlers allows more space for other samples and reduces the possibility that holes get poked in the bag. If you do not remove antlers from your deer, you will not receive those antlers back from the NCWRC. They will be discarded.

If you decide to remove the entire skull cap (rather than each individual antler), please take care to place any portions of brain attached to the skull cap in the bag with the deer head.

How long does it take to get results back?

Expect several weeks to get your deer's test results back. Staff are making every effort to empty the freezers at least once per week and must remove the sample tissues from each head, label and package them, then ship them to the diagnostic lab. Please be patient through this multi-step process. You can view your test results at ncwildlife.org/CWD.

Can I eat the deer before my test results come back?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, to date there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in people. While there is no scientific evidence that CWD can infect humans, some animal studies suggest CWD poses a risk to certain types of non-human primates. The CDC states it is important to keep the agents of all known prion diseases (also including mad cow disease and scrapie in sheep) from entering the human food chain. For more information, read “Precautions for Handling and Processing Deer,” which is located on ncwildlife.org/CWD.

If hunting where CWD has been confirmed, you should have your harvested animal tested for CWD and avoid consuming meat from any animal testing positive.

Is it safe to eat the venison from a deer that has tested positive for CWD?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, to date there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in people. While there is no scientific evidence that CWD can infect humans, some animal studies suggest CWD poses a risk to certain types of non-human primates. The CDC states that it is important to keep the agents of all known prion diseases (also including mad cow disease and scrapie in sheep) from entering the human food chain. For more information, read “Precautions for Handling and Processing Deer,” which is located on ncwildlife.org/CWD.

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How likely is that my deer will test positive for CWD?

Unknown.

Can I get CWD from handling the meat of an infected deer?

There have not been any reported cases of CWD infection in people. However, the NCWRC recommends hunters follow a list of precautions for processing and handling deer to limit the potential spread of CWD in the environment and reduce the risks of food-borne illness in general. For more information, read “Precautions for Handling and Processing Deer,” which is located on ncwildlife.org/CWD.



**For more information visit:
ncwildlife.org/CWD**