

Updated February 2016

Testing for Chronic Wasting Disease in New Jersey

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a neurologic disease of deer and other cervids that is caused by an infectious protein known as a prion. It belongs to a group of neurologic diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, which also includes scrapie of sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathy of cattle (BSE or “mad cow disease”), and transmissible mink encephalopathy (TME). At this time, there is no scientific evidence that CWD is transmissible to humans.

To conduct the survey we collect deer heads from cooperating butchers throughout the state. Retropharyngeal lymph nodes are extracted from the neck and submitted to a USDA-certified laboratory for testing. Each year we also collect samples from sick deer that display symptoms that are consistent with CWD.

The first survey for CWD in New Jersey was conducted during the 1997-98 hunting season, and sampling has been conducted annually since 2002. During the most recent sampling period (9/15/15 – 12/4/15) 563 wild deer were tested. A total of 6,256 wild deer have been tested since 1997. In addition to the wild deer, 136 captive deer, 6 captive elk and 2 captive reindeer have been tested. All samples to date have been negative for CWD.

The following is a summary of the surveys of wild deer populations conducted since 1997. The totals listed include both hunter-killed and symptomatic deer. Figure 1 shows the Deer Management Units (DMUs) that were sampled in 2015 and Figure 2 shows all of the DMUs that have been sampled to date.

1997-98: The first CWD survey was conducted jointly by the Division of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Samples were collected from 502 wild deer at checking stations. In addition to CWD, the deer were also tested for Bovine Tuberculosis, and all were found to be negative.

2002-3: This survey was also conducted jointly by NJDFW, USDA and NJDA. Samples were collected at deer checking station selected based on overall population densities and proximity to captive cervid facilities. A total of 900 wild deer were tested.

2003-4: Sampling was focused on a small number of high-risk DMUs that were located near captive cervid facilities where deer had been illegally imported from Wisconsin, where CWD is endemic. A total of 56 wild deer were tested.

2004-5: This survey focused on deer killed under NJDFW’s Community Based Deer Management Program. Deer were shot by commercial contractors for municipalities not

able to open lands to public access during normal deer seasons. A total of 368 deer were tested.

2005-6: This was the first survey using hunter-killed deer heads that were supplied by cooperating butchers, and this is the collection method that has been used in all subsequent surveys. A total 522 deer were tested.

2006-7: A total of 542 deer were tested.

2007-8: A total of 339 deer were tested.

2008-9: A total of 378 deer were tested.

2009-10: A total of 391 deer were tested.

2010-11: A total of 393 deer were tested.

2011-12: A total of 362 deer were tested.

2013: A total of 398 deer were tested.

2014: A total of 542 deer were tested.

2015: A total of 561 deer were tested.

SCROLL DOWN FOR MAPS

Figure 1. Deer management units sampled for CWD in 2015.

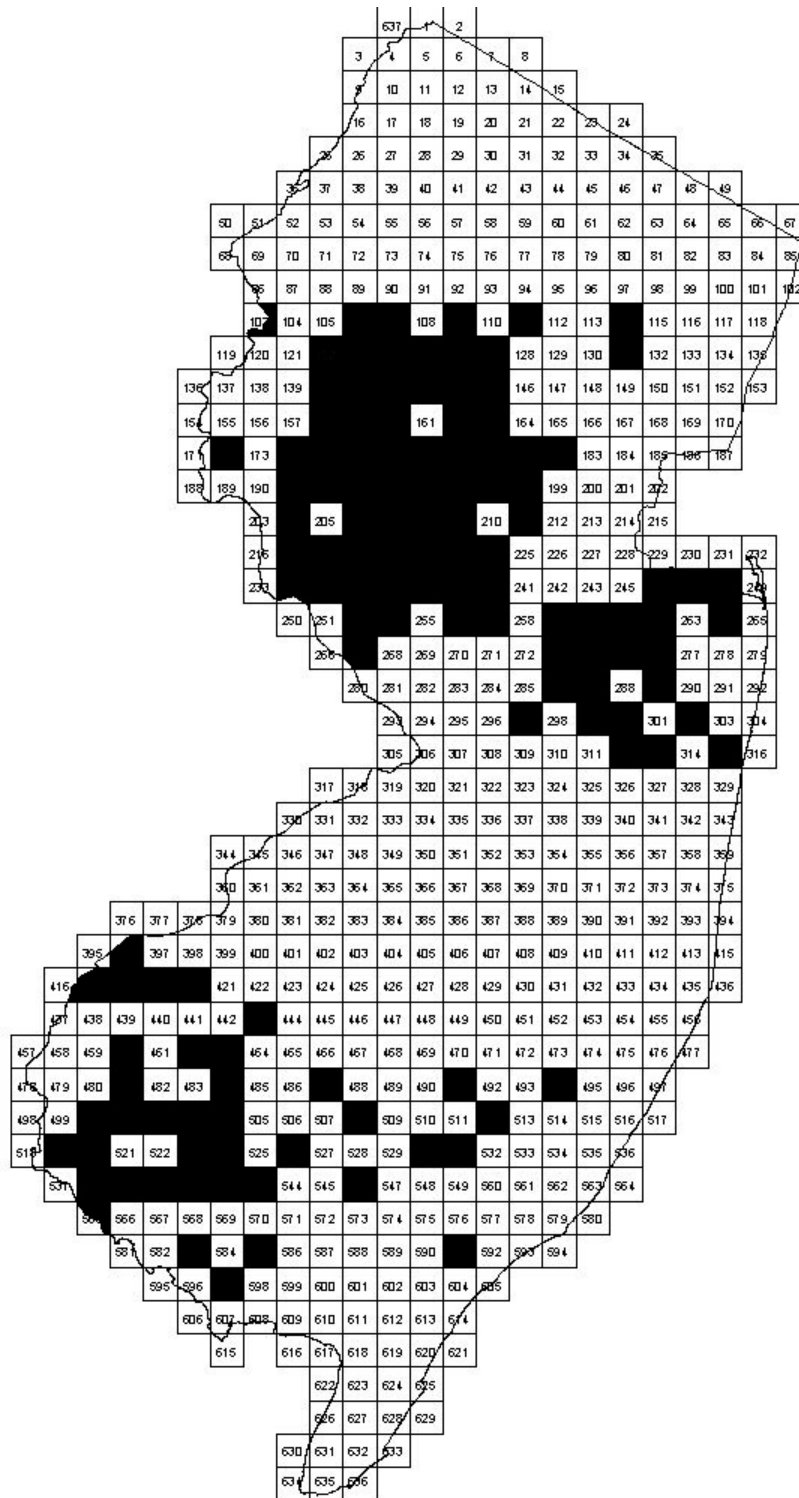


Figure 2. Deer management units sampled for CWD 1997-2015.

