

MANITOBA CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE Summary Report of Response Actions in GHAs 27 and 28

As part of Manitoba’s routine surveillance of CWD, an infected mule deer was detected outside of Coulter in southwest Manitoba, 10-km north of the U.S. border and 50-km from Saskatchewan border, in Game Hunting Area (GHA) 28. At that time, the department was focusing management actions in the Dropmore area of GHA 22, where the first case of CWD in Manitoba was confirmed in November 2021. In March 2022, the department shifted its approach to CWD management in Manitoba to the Coulter area of southwest Manitoba in GHAs 27 and 28. Removing and sampling mule deer was an important part of an initial CWD management strategy in this area.

I. SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

Recent management actions taken in the area surrounding the CWD finding in Coulter resulted in the following outcomes:

- Significantly reduced the local mule deer population, reducing CWD transmission risk;
- Provided information on cervid numbers and movement in the region,
- Provided evidence that CWD is not established in the local mule deer population;
- Identified the number and location of remaining at-risk deer;
- Facilitated the salvaging of deer meat.
- From the samples submitted, laboratory results confirmed no additional mule deer or white-tailed deer tested positive for CWD within the target area;

Combining management actions, a total of 70 mule deer were sampled from the local area and management actions significantly reduced the local deer population and the risk of CWD transmission. Aside from the initial CWD positive case, laboratory results confirmed no additional deer tested positive for CWD.

II. LOCAL COMMUNITY MULE DEER HUNTING OPPORTUNITY

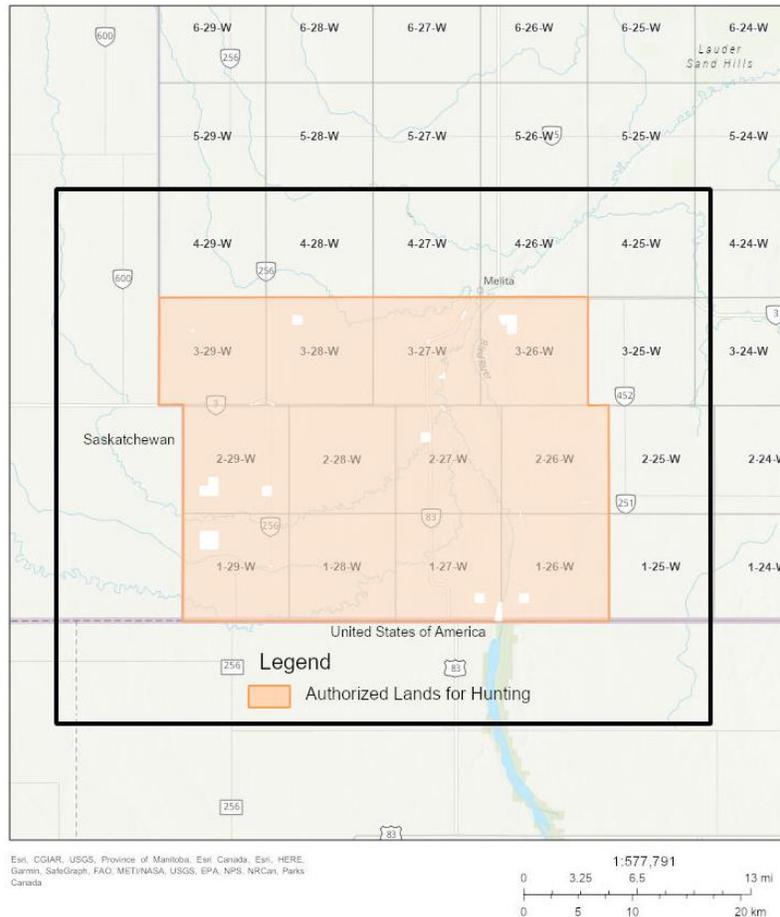
From March 4 – 13, the department issued permits to local landowners and their families to hunt mule deer on private land in the target area where permission was granted (Figure 1). To be entitled to a permit to hunt during this opportunity, individuals and their family members must have owned land within the target area. Those eligible to participate were permitted to harvest up to 5 mule deer, required to submit samples for CWD testing and required to abide by all general hunting laws and regulations. This local opportunity contributed test samples while controlling the movement of carcasses and high-risk material to other areas of the province. Hunting of moose, elk and white-tailed deer remained prohibited in the target area.

A total of 17 mule deer kill permits were provided to hunters over the course of the opportunity, with each permit granting the authority to harvest up to 5 mule deer for a total allowable harvest of 85 mule deer. During the 10 days this opportunity was offered, hunters brought 13 mule deer to the check station and samples were collected for CWD testing (Table 1). Lab testing did not detect CWD in any of the submitted samples.

Table 1. Results from the March 4 – 13 local community mule deer hunting opportunity.

SPECIES	# Harvested	# Tested for CWD	# Tested CWD Positive
Mule Deer	13	13	0

Figure 1. Target area for CWD management actions in GHA 27 and 28.



III. GROUND-BASED MULE DEER REMOVAL

From March 14 – 17, the department supplemented the local community mule deer hunting opportunity with a ground-based removal of mule deer by department staff where permission was granted within the target area (Figure 1).

This method was pursued because other jurisdictions have shown that to be effective in preventing further spread and maintaining low prevalence rates of CWD in an area, supplementing hunter harvest with the use of trained sharpshooters is necessary to reduce local deer populations in areas where CWD has been detected. Removing and sampling mule deer in the target area was an important part of this initial strategy.

The department collected samples for CWD testing from mule deer harvested and all deer that were found dead in the area (eg. road kill, winter kill) to better understand prevalence and potential distribution of CWD around where the disease was detected. Meat salvaged from animals removed by sharpshooting was individually bagged and stored until results confirmed samples tested negative for CWD. Meat was then made available on a first come, first serve basis to locals who expressed interest in receiving salvaged deer meat. High-risk material was contained on the processing site and disposed of in a landfill approved to accept this type of material, where it was buried and capped.

A total of 55 mule deer were removed from the target area by department staff and samples were collected for CWD testing (Table 2). An additional 2 mule deer and 14 white-tailed deer were found dead and were also submitted for CWD testing. Lab testing did not detect CWD in any of the submitted samples.

Table 2. Results from the March 14 – 17 ground-based mule deer removal.

SPECIES	# Deer Removed	# Deer found dead	# Tested for CWD	# Tested CWD Positive	Meat Salvaged
Mule Deer	55	2	57	0	44
White-tailed Deer	0	14	14	0	0

IV. NEXT STEPS

An aerial deer population survey of all cervids in the target area was completed on March 16. The results are being reviewed to assess current cervid distribution and especially to identify the number and location of remaining at-risk deer in the area. Information gathered from this survey and the results of management actions will be used to guide future CWD management actions in this area and elsewhere in the province. Additional sampling of deer in the area may be necessary, however the department hopes to engage hunters to assist with further sampling as the next step.

A mule deer recovery strategy is currently under development for long-term management of mule deer in Manitoba. Options for enhanced surveillance are being reviewed and strategies for additional sampling of mule deer in areas where CWD has been detected will continue to be pursued.

Additional preventative measures to be undertaken include increased enforcement of the ban on feeding of wild cervids, working with landowners and farmers to prevent depredation by wild cervids on agricultural products, and to promote localized dispersal. Reductions in deer populations through increased bag limits may also be necessary.

Hunter participation and local knowledge will continue to contribute greatly to CWD management actions in Manitoba. We remain committed to a CWD response effort that will ensure the long-term sustainability of cervid populations in Manitoba and look forward to future opportunities to work together with stakeholders, local landowners and Indigenous communities to monitor and respond to CWD in Manitoba.