
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 21 APPROVED AS AMENDED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON FARMED CERVIDAE

SUBJECT MATTER: Collection of Research Samples from Cervids Harvested Under Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Plans

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) requests that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) work with chronic wasting disease (CWD) researchers and state agencies to develop an accessible electronic database that includes a list of current research projects, sample types needed for those projects, and individuals trained to collect those samples.

For tissue and environmental samples collected from farmed cervidae depopulated or harvested under an official herd plan or USDA funded cooperative agreement, the USAHA requests that USDA:

- Urge state agencies to collect research and genetic screening samples from farmed cervids harvested and coordinate with USDA to provide those samples to researchers.
- Provide specific guidance and sampling protocols to state agencies for blood, rectoanal mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue biopsies, lymphoid tissues, deoxyribonucleic acid, and environmental samples.

USAHA further encourages coordination between USDA, state agencies, research institutions, diagnostic laboratories, cervid industry foundations, and outside stakeholders to ensure any collected samples are utilized to advance CWD research, surveillance, and disease management tools with possible funding and resource support.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As part of ongoing efforts to manage and mitigate Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in farmed cervid populations, state animal health or wildlife agencies that oversee these populations may require the depopulation or targeted culling of animals under official herd plans. These harvested animals present critical research opportunities to improve CWD diagnostics, genetic susceptibility profiling, and other disease management strategies.

CWD and genetic samples—including blood, rectoanal mucosa-associated lymphoid tissue biopsies, lymphoid tissues, ear punches, and other biological materials—can support ongoing research initiatives that accelerate science-based policy development and enhance long-term disease control outcomes across both wild and farmed cervid populations.

However, many state agencies lack the personnel and capacity to collect and store samples and may be unaware of research initiatives in need of additional materials. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cervid Health Program works closely with states and CWD researchers and is often informed of planned depopulations as well as current CWD research projects. Cervid industry foundations, such as the Elk Research Foundation and the Cervid Livestock Foundation, provide funding for research that advances knowledge of CWD diagnostics and genetic susceptibility. These foundations may also be aware of individuals trained in sample collection for such research.

A collaborative effort among the USDA, state agencies, cervid industry foundations, and CWD researchers would facilitate the collection of these samples and significantly advance CWD research.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

APHIS does not have visibility into privately funded research projects, but we will continue to post all APHIS-funded CWD cooperative agreement projects on our website, including each project's title, recipient, and executive summary.

APHIS welcomes the opportunity to work with partners and stakeholders to expand and strengthen the national CWD sample bank. When possible, APHIS will continue to encourage and support states in collecting research and genetic screening. The Mobile Animal Disease Laboratory (MADL) can now be deployed during depopulation to help efficiently collect, process, and organize samples.

APHIS will also review and update sampling guidance as needed to ensure clear protocols for collecting and shipping a wide range of sample types. The archive currently contains brainstem/obex, lymph nodes, rectal tissue, ear tissue, and blood. When we receive requests from researchers for novel tissues or environmental samples, we work with federal and state personnel to facilitate depopulations and provide the needed materials.

APHIS remains committed to supporting activities that advance CWD research, surveillance, and the development of management tools, including the sharing of banked samples when appropriate and in accordance with program requirements.