

CWD Education and Outreach Plan May 23, 2022

Since first detected in Michigan's deer populations in 2015, 228 deer have tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD) across ten Michigan counties. Without management and education, the spread of CWD in Michigan's deer could have broad negative impacts felt across the state and by a diverse set of stakeholders. While many organizations are researching how to deal with the disease, impacted stakeholders, including the public, need information about the disease and policies related to it that may affect them.

During the charrette process, we learned from participants what messages they want to hear, how the participants would like to receive information about CWD, who their trusted messengers are, and when they would like to receive information about CWD. With this information, and from conversation and input from participants, we have built the following CWD Education and Outreach Plan, which will be implemented by several organizations over the next two years.

Goals:

- Increase awareness of CWD in Michigan.
- Encourage human behaviors that reduce the risk of CWD spread.

Audience:

- Deer hunters
- Landowners and agricultural producers
- Wildlife viewers
- Deer processors and taxidermists
- Local governments, tribes, conservation districts, other organizations

Trusted Messengers:

- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (including conservation officers)
- Michigan State University (Extension, Fisheries & Wildlife, Quantitative Wildlife Center)
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs
- National Deer Association
- Conservation Districts
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD)

Messaging Timeline:

- Messaging to hunters is most effective close to hunting seasons (August – September)
- Frequent messaging may be best for message retention
- It's important to reach out to hunters regularly; however the most important messages need to be delivered right before hunting season.

Messages:

All audiences as well as local governments, conservation districts, other organizations and wildlife viewers:

- CWD is a prion disease that cannot be cured. A prion is a misfolded protein produced by the body. It is unknown what makes the protein misfold.
- CWD is not known to infect humans, and research is an ongoing priority.
- Report any deer that look sick or are acting abnormally to the DNR by calling 517-284-9453.
- The State of Michigan funds the DNR, universities, and other organizations to study CWD and how to address it.
- Deer congregating around bait and feed is a risk factor for CWD.
- Want to know more? Get the current information here: Michigan.gov/CWD and MSU Extension's CWD website.
- We can work together to slow the spread of CWD and ensure Michigan has a healthy deer population and environment.
- DNR tests for CWD in specific zones that rotate throughout the state each year.

Deer hunters:

- CWD testing is important to understand where the disease is in the state.
- Public health experts recommend testing deer for CWD before eating venison from a known CWD area.
- Do not eat venison if your deer tests positive for CWD.
- One strategy to reduce *unknown* risk is to test your deer for CWD and not eat the meat if it's positive.
- Wear gloves if you handle a deer carcass.
- Do not cut through brain, spinal cord, or lymph nodes when processing deer.
- CWD prions cannot be cooked out of meat.
- Regulations and testing change based on the information and resources available.
- Make sure to properly dispose of your deer carcass.

Deer processors and taxidermists:

- Public health experts recommend testing deer for CWD before eating venison from a known CWD area.
- Do not eat venison if your deer tests positive for CWD.
- Wear gloves if you handle a deer carcass.
- Clean and disinfect all tools and equipment used to process deer in a 50/50 bleach solution.
- CWD prions cannot be cooked out of meat.
- Regulations and testing change based on the information and resources available.

Landowners and agricultural producers:

- Explore deer mitigation methods to keep deer out of fields.
- Minimize commodity piles during harvest that may attract deer.
- Wear gloves if you handle a deer carcass.

Education and Outreach Products:

What (task)	Who (who is the lead for this task, list others who may assist.)
CWD education email to all deer license buyers with an email address on file.	DNR
Social Media posts to highlight CWD research videos created by MSUE/DNR.	MSUE, MUCC, DNR
CWD research and management webinar series.	MSUE, NDA?
CWD research and management in-person seminar series.	NDA?
Team of peer educators to help spread the word locally about CWD.	MSUE (pending requirement for MSUE's VSP)
Interviews on Michigan Out of Doors with CWD experts/researchers.	MUCC to ask MOOD
Articles in Michigan Outdoor News and other popular publications detailing CWD regulations, management, and current research projects.	DNR, MSUE, MUCC
Expand CWD education section in DNR Hunting Digest.	DNR
Variety of articles about CWD facts, research, management for partners/organizations/conservation districts to put in newsletters and publications.	MSUE, MUCC (convention, sport shows)
Social Media posts – CWD regulations and management	DNR, MUCC
Press releases and emails -CWD regulations and management	DNR
CWD Media Toolkit for local governments, tribes, organizations with brochures, posters, maps, etc.	DNR, MSUE
CWD experts on popular hunting podcasts	DNR, MSU researchers
QR Code on back of hunting license for more information about CWD	DNR

Next Steps

- when and how to use trusted messengers

- reconnect with tribal partners to understand what next steps look like from their perspective and what collaborations are possible
- reconnect with steering committee members who weren't able to participate (POC, health, MDARD, local government, farm bureau, MML, MTA, MAC, chamber)
- explore peer educators in "hotspot" counties, driven by non-governmental organizations, give peer educators ownership

Implementation Acknowledgement

Turnover within organizations interested in executing the plan as of May 2022, and longevity and sustainability of positions of those involved who would carry out the plan will limit capacity to implement this plan and change what is possible for implementation.