



CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE - PROTECTING SCOTLAND'S DEER

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a highly infectious disease which has devastating effects on many populations of wild and farmed deer. Red deer are also susceptible. CWD affects only deer and at present CWD is restricted to the United States of America and Canada.

CWD is caused by a prion and belongs to the same group of diseases as scrapie, which affects sheep and goats, and 'mad cow disease' (bovine spongiform encephalopathy or 'BSE'). This group of diseases are known collectively as 'transmissible spongiform encephalopathies' or 'TSE' for short and CWD is the most infectious of these as shown by it being the only one that is maintained in a wild population.

- CWD has resulted in the death of every known infected deer
- There are currently no treatments or vaccines available to control the disease
- Efforts to control the spread of CWD in the USA/Canada have failed and it may be beyond control.

The prion is transmitted in deer body fluids and body parts including urine, faeces, saliva, central nervous system tissues and meat. The prion can remain infectious for up to ten years when bound to soil, several years on stainless steel and it defies normal farm disinfection processes. It is not known whether it can be disseminated via a carrion eater's digestive system.

Animals may take 18-24 months to exhibit clinical signs after becoming infected and become more infectious to others as the incubation period progresses.

CWD, like any TSE, is a Notifiable Disease and suspicion of the disease in any animal must be reported to your local Animal Health Office.

Disease surveillance carried out in some European countries has so far failed to find evidence of CWD present. However, if it were to become established in wild deer it would have major consequences:

- Loss of large numbers of the wild deer population
- Restrictions on sales of venison and live deer
- Restrictions on stalking activities

If the disease became established stopping its spread might be extremely challenging or practically impossible.

A possible (likely) route of transmission into the UK could be through countryside users bringing in contaminated clothing and equipment. A specific risk group might be hunters or stalkers who have hunted in parts of North America where CWD is present.

What can I do to limit the risk of disease spread?

CWD is highly infectious and is very resistant to both weather conditions and traditional disinfectants so it can remain in the environment for a long time. Additionally, it has been shown to stick to soil particles very efficiently for up to ten years. The only way to rapidly inactivate the infectious agent of CWD is to soak articles in a solution of bleach that has 20,000 parts per million of active chlorine, or 2 molar sodium hydroxide solution for one hour. This treatment would obviously be highly detrimental to most clothing, footwear and hunting equipment and so is mostly impractical.

As a countryside user visiting the UK/USA/Canada

- Consider whether you need to take clothing/equipment with you. Clothing and equipment bought or borrowed, used and then left in North America poses no risk to UK deer populations.
- If you need to bring such clothing or equipment to the UK, make sure it is scrupulously clean of all potential contamination - soil, blood, faeces etc.
- Meticulous cleaning of all adherent debris from equipment and clothing, especially footwear, will significantly reduce the risk of introducing CWD into this country, although it will not eliminate the risk.
- Do not bring any trophies or body parts back to the UK.

As a host/sporting agent

- Send this leaflet to North American stalking guests and also those who may have visited North America so they are aware of their responsibilities.
- Check all of their kit for cleanliness (it is unlikely that their kit will have been inspected for appropriate cleanliness at border control).
- Don't assume that because they are visiting from North America they will be aware of the risk of CWD transmission.

By adopting these guidelines you can help minimise the risk of transmission of this harmful disease into the UK.

Further information including details of clinical signs of CWD and the action to be taken if disease is suspected is available at:

http://www.bds.org.uk/chronic_waste_disease.html

<http://www.archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/bse/publications/documents/tse-deer.pdf>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare/Diseases/disease/wasting>

This information leaflet has been produced by the Deer Management Round Table. Membership includes:

