



To the Members of the General Assembly:

Please accept the attached 2022-23 Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Report. Public Act 101-0066 directs the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to provide a report to the General Assembly providing information regarding deer management programs on an annual basis. Please find background information on Illinois' CWD management below.

The Illinois CWD Targeted Surveillance Program is one of the longest running (21 years and counting) and most successful programs of its kind. The success and longevity of Illinois' CWD program is due to the cooperation of landowners, hunters, and policymakers and the hard work of our biologists. The program serves as a model for other states and provinces when they are faced with CWD. However, the last few years of monitoring indicates an increasing trend in disease prevalence in Illinois' CWD counties. The IDNR is closely monitoring this trend and discussing options to try and mitigate potential impacts to the Illinois' deer population, as well as our valued deer hunters.

CWD was first confirmed in Illinois on November 1, 2002 in a wild deer. CWD is a deadly disease in white-tailed deer and other members of the deer family. CWD belongs to the group of diseases called transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), or prion diseases. Similar diseases include Mad Cow Disease in cattle, CJD in humans, and scrapie in sheep. CWD is always fatal and there is no known cure. Left unchecked, the disease could reduce deer populations to very low levels.

In a nutshell, the Targeted Surveillance Program relies on extensive surveillance data to identify sections (1 mi<sup>2</sup>) where CWD occurs, estimate local prevalence rates, and monitor how disease distribution changes over time. These data are used to inform CWD management, which consists primarily of post-hunting season sharpshooting in those areas identified by the surveillance. The goal is to remove diseased deer from the landscape at a faster rate than new cases are being infected. The targeted sharpshooting program only affects a tiny proportion of the total area of Illinois CWD zone. This approach has kept disease prevalence low while still maintaining huntable deer populations in the affected counties. It is a very responsible approach for the long-term health of our deer herd and for the majority of Illinois' deer hunters. We donate all the deer meat to either cooperating landowners or food banks, that is appropriate for donation. There are times where the meat is determined to be unfit for human consumption and is disposed of. More information and previous year's CWD reports can be found on our website at <https://dnr.illinois.gov/programs/cwd.html>.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the attached report.

Sincerely,

Natalie Phelps Finnie  
Director