



Wyoming Department of Agriculture

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Dave Freudenthal, Governor

John Etchepare, Director

September 29, 2005

CWD Plan Coordinator
Christie Christensen
Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.
5400 Bishop Blvd.
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Dear Ms. Christensen:

Following are the comments from the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the Draft of Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan (Plan).

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government, which is to be dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposal will have major impacts upon our agriculture industry, our natural resources and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it's important that we be kept informed of proposed actions and decisions and that we continue to be provided the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

We appreciate the opportunity to read and offer comments on the Plan. We support the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) on attempting to minimize the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in deer and elk. We offer the following comments to assist the WGFD in their efforts with the Plan.

Include Landowners in Plan

The target audiences the Plan identified are a diverse group of individuals who offer expertise to aid the WGFD in the management of CWD. We support the WGFD implementation of educational programs, brochures, and tools to assist others such as private landowners about CWD. Private landowners will be an asset to the WGFD in the early detection and monitoring of animals who may possibly be affected.

These same landowners also hire guides and outfitters to hunt their properties. The guides and outfitters can intensively monitor individual animals and large herds. The documentation process designed by WGFD staff will reflect the age, sex, location, and visual symptoms of elk and deer in a specified area. The WGFD should continue to monitor the number of animals harvested in an area. Survey results could indicate a trend in the decline of hunters for elk and deer where CWD is present. Hunters who resort to hunting outside CWD areas will no longer keep populations at the sustainable level within areas where CWD is present. The populations will undoubtedly increase and disease like CWD will also increase.

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9/28/2005

WGFD—CWD Management Plan

Page 2

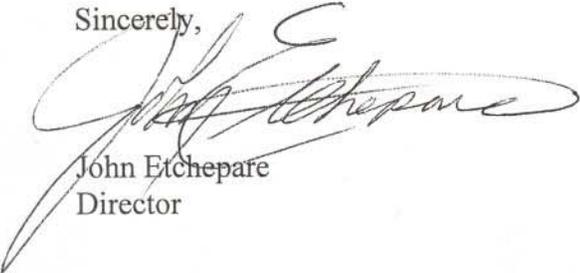
Revise Testing Procedures

We do not support hunters paying for the cost of testing for CWD. We encourage the WGFD to seek grant money to cover the CWD test costs. In the interest of the WGFD, the hunters, and landowners, testing as many animals as possible is encouraged. Random sampling of elk and deer by WGFD personnel would not be necessary if drop off sites were readily available for hunters. Hunters could leave the animals' heads and give a much larger random sample than the WGFD could provide. We encourage the WGFD give extra consideration or alternative sampling methods for those hunters who have a trophy animal and are mounting the head. A brain core sample is one method that may already exist. Hunters may already be discouraged to hunt elk and deer in a given area due to CWD. The additional cost of testing may become one more reason for them to leave the area entirely.

Additional options for funding could include a "CWD" stamp for areas where CWD occurs. This stamp would be similar to the elk feedground stamp required in Western Wyoming. The stamp may supplement the cost of testing or be used for additional research. Adding an additional cost, however, may also be a reason for hunters to leave the area.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the CWD Management Plan. We strongly encourage the WGFD establish working relationships with private landowners to help monitor the progress of CWD. The procedures the WGFD takes to reduce incidences in elk and deer on private and public lands is important. We also support the Consumer Health Services section of the WDA being involved in all decisions related to the processing of elk and deer. We appreciate the efforts of the WGFD in tackling the CWD issues.

Sincerely,



John Etchepare
Director

JE/jw

Cc: Governor's Planning Office
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Wyoming Wool Growers Association
Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation
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