

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Updates

The fall Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) Wildlife Health Program update will primarily focus on chronic wasting disease in advance of the upcoming surveillance season. We will also provide a short update on other wildlife health topics.

Chronic Wasting Disease

MNDNR will provide a brief review of the current CWD distribution in free-ranging white-tailed deer along with an overview of changes being implemented this year.

New Deer Disposal Rule

MNDNR has made changes related to wild deer carcass management to shift away from carcass movement restrictions to a new deer carcass rule. Deer carcasses that originate from a chronic wasting disease management zone that are not retained by the hunter must be disposed of by:

- providing the parts to a licensed Minnesota taxidermist for disposal according to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.425;
- providing the parts to a Minnesota meat processor;
- disposing of the parts in a sanitary landfill; or
- if the deer was harvested on private property, keeping and disposing of the parts on the private property where the deer was harvested.

Carcasses of deer taken in chronic wasting disease management zones that have been tested for chronic wasting disease and for which the test results indicate that the disease was not detected may be disposed of in any lawful manner.

Enrolled members of Minnesota Tribal governments, as defined under Minnesota Statutes, section 10.65, subdivision 2, paragraph (a), clause (4), who take deer on lands held in trust by the Minnesota Tribal government that the member is enrolled in are exempt from this subpart.

CWD Surveillance Changes

MNDNR will be shifting away from risk-based CWD surveillance to a rotational surveillance effort that will survey the entire state over the next four years. This effort will provide a better understanding of CWD distribution statewide. Mandatory surveillance for the upcoming 2026 rifle opener will be focused on southwestern Minnesota. After the four-year rotation is completed, MNDNR will reassess the long-term surveillance plan.

Hunters may still get their deer tested through mail-in kits, the taxidermist partner sampling program, or appointments at DNR offices.

Other Relevant Updates

Additional wildlife health topics will be covered, including a brief update on current research projects.