

MASSACHUSETTS BANS IMPORTATION OF DEER

Precaution Taken To Prevent the Spread of Chronic Wasting Disease

MassWildlife has joined with other northeastern states to prohibit the importation of all species of deer. This is a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) into wild or farm-raised deer. The importation prohibition takes effect immediately and applies to European red deer, sika deer, fallow deer and reindeer, all species commonly raised commercially. The farming or importation of white-tailed deer, elk or moose was not permitted prior to the newly-enacted restrictions.

CWD has been diagnosed in captive deer and elk herds in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Montana, Oklahoma, South Dakota and the Canadian Province of Saskatchewan. It has been confirmed in wild deer populations in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska and most recently, Wisconsin. There are no known cases of the disease in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts' action follows deer importation bans in New York and Vermont as well as a resolution passed by the Association of Northeastern U.S. Fish & Wildlife Agency Directors. CWD is a relatively new disease and is not fully understood. It is a brain disease related to Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, also known as "Mad Cow Disease". CWD appears to be caused by an abnormal protein called a prion that occurs in the brain of affected deer. It can be spread by close contact between animals, and animals exposed to CWD-contaminated environments. Afflicted animals become gaunt, wasting away until death. There is no known transmission link of CWD from deer to humans.

"By banning the import of deer into Massachusetts, we can reduce the risk of Chronic Wasting Disease entering the state and help prevent our wild deer population from being exposed to this deadly threat," states MassWildlife Deer Project Leader Bill Woytek.

Dr. Robert Deblinger, Assistant Director for Wildlife Research adds, "We are in a strong position in Massachusetts because the Fisheries & Wildlife Board passed extremely restrictive regulations regarding deer farming some six years ago. Consequently, deer farming is a limited venture in Massachusetts, with about 20 deer farms statewide that are not allowed to import or possess white-tailed deer or elk.

MassWildlife is working on a CWD monitoring system and is developing strategies for long-term management of the problem, including evaluating the efforts of other states.

For additional information on Chronic Wasting Disease or the prohibition on importation of deer, contact Bill Woytek (508-792-7270x121) or Dr. Robert Deblinger (508-792-7270x128), at MassWildlife's Field Headquarters in Westboro.

Bill Davis, Wildlife Biologist
Media & Public Affairs Coordinator
MassWildlife, Field Headquarters
Westboro, MA 01581
TEL (508) 792-7270 x 153, FAX (508) 792-7275
EMAIL bill.davis@state.ma.us
<http://www.MassWildlife.org>