

FALL HUNTING

CWD impacts out-of-state hunters on return

From staff reports

HARRISBURG — The thousands of Pennsylvania hunters who soon will be heading off to hunt big game in other states can do their share to slow the spread of chronic wasting disease in the Commonwealth.

Those who hunt out-of-state are reminded that Pennsylvania prohibits importing specific carcass parts from members of the deer family — including mule deer, elk and moose — from 21 states and two Canadian provinces.

The parts ban affects hunters who harvest deer, elk or moose in: Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland (only from CWD Management Area), Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York (only from Madison and Oneida counties), North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia (only from CWD Containment Area), West Virginia (only from CWD Containment Area, which includes parts of three counties), Wisconsin and Wyoming; as well as the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Pennsylvania hunters harvesting any deer, elk or moose in those areas, whether the animal was taken from the wild or from a captive, high-fence operation, must comply with rules aimed at slowing the spread of chronic wasting disease in Pennsylvania.

CWD was detected in Pennsylvania for the first time last year, and those hunting out-of-state must leave behind the carcass parts that have the highest

risk for transmitting the disease. Those parts are: the head (including brain, tonsils, eyes and any lymph nodes); spinal cord/backbone; spleen; skull plate with attached antlers, if visible brain or spinal cord tissue is present; cape, if visible brain or spinal cord tissue is present; upper canine teeth, if root structure or other soft tissue is present; any object or article containing visible brain or spinal cord tissue; unfinished taxidermy mounts; and brain-tanned hides.

“This is the first time that we’ve entered the fall hunting seasons knowing that we have chronic wasting disease inside Pennsylvania,” Game Commission executive director Carl G. Roe said. “But that doesn’t mean we’ve given up the fight to slow the disease’s spread or make its impacts on our deer herd as minimal as possible.

“High-risk parts are classified as such for a reason,” he said. “And while we wish Pennsylvanians luck in all of their out-of-state hunts, we also ask them to

make sure they’re following the rules and bringing back home with them only the parts they’re allowed.”

Hunters who are successful in those areas from which the importation of high-risk parts into Pennsylvania is banned are allowed to import meat from any deer, elk, moose, mule deer or caribou, so long as the backbone is not present. Successful hunters also are allowed to bring back cleaned skull plates with attached antlers, if no visible brain or spinal cord tissue is present; tanned hide or raw hide with no visible brain or spinal cord tissue present; capes, if no visible brain or spinal cord tissue is present; upper canine teeth, if no root structure or other soft tissue is present; and finished taxidermy mounts.

Roe urged hunters heading to a state with a history of CWD to become familiar with that state’s wildlife regulations and guidelines for the transportation of harvested game animals.

Pennsylvania detected its first case of chronic wasting disease last year in a captive

deer kept at an Adams County facility; another deer that had lived in the same pen later tested positive for the disease. Since that time, the disease was detected in three free-ranging deer harvested by hunters in Bedford and Blair counties during the 2012 firearms deer season.

In response to those cases, the Game Commission has outlined two Disease Management Areas (DMAs) totaling about 1,500 square miles, and special rules regarding deer hunting, the feeding of wildlife and the transport of high-risk deer parts apply within those areas. Maps of the DMAs are available at the Game Commission’s

website and are shown on pages 53 and 54 of the 2013-14 Pennsylvania Hunting & Trapping Digest.

The exact rules deer hunters within those areas will need to follow are being finalized and will be announced soon by the Game Commission.

However, those who live in a DMA and are successful in out-of-state hunts should know that — like other Pennsylvanians hunting out-of-state — they are permitted to bring low-risk deer parts back home with them.

Roe said hunters who harvest a deer, elk or moose in a state or province where CWD is known to exist

should follow instructions from that state’s wildlife agency on how and where to submit the appropriate samples to have their animal tested. If, after returning to Pennsylvania, a hunter is notified that his or her game tested positive for CWD, the hunter is encouraged to immediately contact the Game Commission region office that serves the county in which they reside for disposal recommendations and assistance.

First identified in 1967, CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) that affects cervids, including all species of deer, elk and moose. It is a

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