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MDC Changes Deer Hunting Regs to Slow CWD

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Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is asking deer hunters in 19 central and northeastern Missouri counties to help limit the spread of a deadly deer disease through increased harvest opportunities this fall and winter. The Missouri Conservation Commission recently approved several changes to regulations for the upcoming 2015-16 fall deer hunting season that focus on slowing the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD).

Chronic Wasting Disease infects only deer and other members of the deer family by causing degeneration of brain tissue, which slowly leads to death. The disease has no vaccine or cure and is 100-percent fatal.

“A primary way CWD is spread is through deer-to-deer contact,” explained MDC State Wildlife Veterinarian Kelly Straka. “Deer gathering and interacting in larger numbers can potentially increase the spread in an area. Young bucks can also potentially spread the disease to new areas as they search for territories and mates.”

REGULATION CHANGES

The regulation changes focus on slowing the spread of the disease in and around counties where CWD has been found. The changes will remove the antler-point restriction so hunters can harvest more young bucks. The changes will also increase the availability of firearms antlerless permits from 1 to 2 to help thin local deer numbers.

COUNTIES IMPACTED

These regulation changes add to similar measures MDC enacted in 2012 for six counties in northeastern Missouri after CWD was discovered in Linn and Macon counties. Counties affected by those regulation changes were Adair, Chariton, Linn, Macon, Randolph, and Sullivan.

The recent regulation changes add five more northeastern counties of Knox, Scotland, Schuyler, Shelby, and Putnam and come after six deer tested positive for CWD this past fall and winter in Adair County.

The recent regulation changes also include eight counties in central Missouri and come after a buck harvested in Cole County tested positive for the disease this past winter. Those counties are Boone, Callaway, Cole, Cooper, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, and Osage.

“The challenge with CWD is that there is no way to fully eradicate the disease from an area once it has become established,” said Dr. Straka. “While we do not expect short-term population impacts from the disease, CWD is likely to have serious long-term consequences to the health of Missouri’s deer herd. Therefore, we have and will continue to focus on slowing the spread of the disease among deer in the affected areas, and trying to limit the spread to new areas of the state.”

CWD TESTING RESULTS

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) reports that a total of 16 new cases of CWD were found in free-ranging deer through its testing efforts this past fall and winter. Of the 16 new cases, nine were found in Macon County, six in Adair County, and one in Cole County.

These 16 new cases bring the total number of Missouri free-ranging deer that have tested positive for CWD to 26 overall since the disease was first discovered in the state in 2010.

MDC collected more than 3,400 tissue samples for CWD testing from harvested and other free-ranging deer this past fall and winter. The Department has collected more than 43,000 tissue samples since it began testing for the emerging disease in 2001. MDC will continue increased testing efforts this fall and winter in areas where CWD has been found.

MDC is also considering regulation changes for the 2016-17 deer season that would

require testing of deer harvested during the opening weekend of the fall firearms season in the 19 counties in and around where CWD has been found.

DON'T TRANSPORT CARCASSES!

Dr. Straka said that hunters can also spread the disease by transporting and improperly disposing of potentially infected deer carcasses. She explained that CWD can be spread through carcass parts that contain brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, or lymph nodes.

“To help prevent the spread of diseases, such as CWD, we strongly discourage deer hunters from moving carcasses of harvested deer from the immediate area,” she said. “If possible, remove meat in the field and leave the carcass behind. If it’s necessary to move the carcass before processing, place the remaining carcass parts after processing in trash bags and properly dispose of them through a trash service or landfill.”

She added that some parts of a harvested deer are safe to move out of the immediate area.

“Items that are safe to transport are meat that is cut and wrapped, or has been boned out,” she explained. “Also safe to transport are quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spine or head attached, hides or capes from which all excess tissue has been removed, antlers including ones attached to skull plates or skulls that have been cleaned of all muscle and brain tissue, and finished taxidermy products.”

MDC is considering regulation changes for the 2016-17 deer season that would prohibit the movement of carcass parts from the 19 counties in and around where CWD has been found and prohibit the importation of certain cervid carcass parts into Missouri.

AVOID FEEDING DEER

Dr. Straka added that MDC strongly discourages hunters and others from feeding or providing salt and minerals to deer.

“Feeding and mineral sites can concentrate deer from a broad area and place them in very close proximity to one another,” she explained. “This can increase the transmission of the disease.”

A regulation that prohibits the feeding of deer and placement of consumable products -- such as salt and mineral blocks -- that are intended to concentrate deer is already in effect in Adair, Chariton, Linn, Macon, Randolph, and Sullivan counties.

MDC is considering a regulation change for the 2016-17 deer season that would expand that regulation to include the 13 additional counties in northeastern and central Missouri in and around where CWD has been found.

PUBLIC COMMENTS WELCOME

MDC welcomes public comments on the regulation changes under consideration for the 2016-17 deer season. Comment online at mdc.mo.gov/node/6.

DEER HUNTING IN MISSOURI

Missouri offers some of the best deer hunting in the country, and deer hunting is an important part of many Missourians' lives and family traditions. The continued spread of CWD in Missouri is likely to reduce future hunting and wildlife-watching opportunities for Missouri's nearly 520,000 deer hunters and almost two million wildlife watchers. Deer hunting is also an important economic driver in Missouri and gives a \$1 billion annual boost to the state and local economies.

DEER HUNTING DATES

Fall deer hunting season dates are as follows.

Archery: Sept. 15 to Nov. 13 and Nov. 25 to Jan. 15

Urban Firearms: Oct. 9 to 12

Youth Firearms: Oct. 31 to Nov. 3 and Jan. 2 and 3, 2016

November Firearms: Nov. 14 to 24

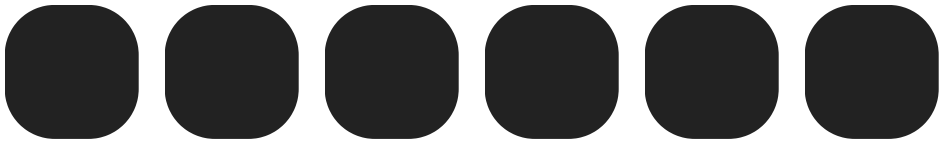
Antlerless Firearms: Nov. 25 to Dec. 6

Alternative Methods: Dec. 19 to 29

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