

NOTICES OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

Notices of Public Information contain corrections that agencies wish to make to their notices of rulemaking; miscellaneous rulemaking information that does not fit into any other category of notice; and other types of information required by statute to be published in the *Register*. Because of the variety of material that is contained in a Notice of Public Information, the Office of the Secretary of State has not established a specific format for these notices.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

ARIZONA GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

STATEWIDE EMERGENCY BAN ON CERVID IMPORTATION

EFFECTIVE MAY 18, 2002

Effective May 18, 2002, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, under direction from the Arizona Game and Fish Commission and under the authority of R12-4-409(G), has instituted an emergency statewide ban on the importation of cervids designated as restricted live wildlife under R12-4-406(A)(9)(b). The purpose of the emergency importation ban is to prevent the movement of captive cervids into Arizona to protect against the introduction of chronic wasting disease to free-ranging or captive wildlife.

The emergency importation ban applies to cervids of the genus *Alces*, common name: moose; cervids of the genus *Odocoileus*, common name: white-tailed and mule deer; and cervids of the genus *Cervus*, common name: red deer and wapiti (elk), except that the species *Cervus nippon*, Nippon deer, is not restricted.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) was first recognized by biologists in the 1960s as a disease syndrome of captive deer held in wildlife research facilities in Ft. Collins, Colorado, but was not recognized as a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy until the late 1970s. This disease was subsequently recognized in captive deer, and later in captive elk, from wildlife research facilities near Ft. Collins, Kremmling, and Meeker, Colorado, and Wheatland, Wyoming, as well as in at least two zoological collections. More recently, CWD has been diagnosed in privately owned elk residing on game ranches in several western states and provinces. Although CWD was first diagnosed in captive research cervids, the original source (or sources) of CWD in either captive cervids or free-ranging cervids is unknown; whether CWD in research animals really preceded CWD in the wild, or *vice versa*, is equally uncertain.

Much of the information we have on this disease comes from the endemic area of northeastern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming where it appears that, on average, CWD probably infects about five to fifteen percent of the deer in the area. Modeling of the impact of this disease indicates that this rate of infection is sufficient to suppress deer population levels in this area.

In addition to cases in captive research and free-ranging deer and elk, CWD has been diagnosed in privately owned elk on game farms in several states beginning in 1996. Infection has been particularly severe in a group of interconnected facilities near Rapid City, South Dakota that appear to be the original source of infection for other South Dakota game farms as well as the Saskatchewan epidemic. In contrast, infected elk in two of three Nebraska farms originated in Colorado, and infected elk in Oklahoma apparently originated in Montana; CWD has been confirmed in the Montana and Colorado source herds.

At this time, the detection of CWD in new areas is expanding rapidly as there have been detections in free-ranging deer in additional areas of Nebraska, Alberta, Wisconsin, and South Dakota during 2002. In addition to the problems associated with this disease on wild populations, there is also a significant economic impact with the detection of the disease in both free ranging and captive cervids. As an example, Saskatchewan has spent approximately \$30 million in attempts at eradicating the disease in infected game farms. In Colorado, a supplemental appropriation of \$300,143 was made in December 2001, and an additional appropriation of \$430,750 is being considered for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2002.

One of the problems with this disease is that it is virtually impossible to eradicate once it enters into a jurisdiction. This conclusion is based on the fact that there is no live animal test for the disease, so an agency cannot implement testing and elimination of only infected animals. Second, there is a long incubation period associated with the disease. Some of the research that has been completed suggests that the incubation period may exceed 36 months, and perhaps even longer. Another problem is that the epidemiological links from one positive herd to 38 other infected captive elk herds in Saskatchewan and the shipment of exposed elk from one infected captive elk operation in Colorado to facilities in 19 states indicate the potential for the spread of CWD via the captive cervid industry. This means that from a few herds, the

disease has the potential to have been spread to as many as 19 other states. Finally, a significant issue with this disease is that one of the measures considered to control its spread is extreme reduction of animal density. This entails removal of a large number of deer that otherwise could be harvested by hunters, which in turn equates to a potential economic loss to not only the Department but also to local businesses such as restaurants and hotels that are supported by hunters.

Although chronic wasting disease (CWD) is not a new disease, there are a number of factors that have escalated the importance of this disease in the last three months. Until recently, this disease was largely thought of as a disease of the 11-county region comprised of southeastern Wyoming, northeastern Colorado, and the panhandle region of Nebraska. However, recently, this disease has been detected in free-ranging wildlife in South Dakota, the West Slope region of Colorado, and Wisconsin. This signals to the wildlife health community that the disease has the capacity to expand to outside what was thought to be the endemic area. The economic consequences of these new detections are immense as is evidenced from the experience in Wisconsin. Within the first month after detection, the Wisconsin wildlife management agency expended approximately \$250,000 in control and public information efforts. This has proven to be the tip of the iceberg as the agency has announced plans to kill approximately 15,000 animals in the focal area. This will also cost the agency considerable money.

At this time, the most effective management approach is to take measures to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the disease does not enter into Arizona. Therefore, effective May 18, 2002, the Arizona Game and Fish Department has imposed an emergency statewide ban on the importation of cervids designated as restricted live wildlife under R12-4-406(A)(9)(b). The Department is also initiating emergency and regular rulemaking on this issue to permanently implement the ban on cervid importation.

If you have any questions, or need any additional information on the emergency importation ban, please contact Jim deVos, Research Branch Chief, Arizona Game and Fish Department WMRS, 2221 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85023, (602) 789-3247.