

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Information for Hunters

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What I need to do if I want to have deer tested for CWD that I killed within the PA border?

Deer heads from inside a Disease Management Area (DMA) cannot be transported to the laboratory and must be submitted to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, who will coordinate the testing free of charge. DMA boundaries and instructions for submitting heads are available at www.pgc.state.pa.us

Deer heads from outside the Disease Management Area can be submitted for CWD testing to any of the Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System laboratories (www.padls.agriculture.pa.gov). CWD Testing is performed at the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory, Harrisburg and New Bolton Center, University of Pennsylvania, for a fee. Samples submitted to the Animal Diagnostic Laboratory at Penn State will separately bill for associated testing costs as outlined below.

2. What is the testing fee of the deer head and what is included?

The testing fee is \$80.

Testing fee of \$80 is comprised of the following: \$18 accession fee, \$16 extraction fee for removal of the retropharyngeal lymph nodes (RLN) and obex from the deer head, \$25 for CWD testing for both obex and RLN, and \$21 for head disposal. If instead of the head, the entire deer is submitted, the disposal cost is \$42. You may be able to prepay some or all of the entire testing fee at time of submission. Cash payment is not accepted.

3. How do I submit the deer head for testing?

- a. Cut or saw the head from the carcass; leave the throat area of the neck attached to the head.
- b. Bring the double or triple plastic-bagged head to any PADLS location.
- c. The head must be accompanied by a completed submission form, [PDCWD FORM 02](#).

NOTE: *Leaking specimens will not be accepted.* Directions and business hours for laboratories can be found at www.padls.agriculture.pa.gov or by calling laboratories at 717-787-8808 (PVL, Harrisburg), 814-863-0837 (PSU, State College), 610-925-6725 (NBC, Kennett Square). The submission form [PD CWD FORM 02](#) for hunters to accompany the submissions can also be found on www.padls.org

4. Can I ship the head to the lab for testing, rather than bringing it in person?

Contact the prospective shipper directly to determine what their requirements and restrictions are. If you do ship, be sure to include cold packs, use next-day delivery (not available for Saturday or Sunday), and include the completed submission form in a sealed zip-lock plastic bag. Testing will not be conducted unless all necessary information is included on the signed form.

5. Should I keep the head chilled at refrigerator temperature (35-40° F) until I can bring it to the lab?

Yes. Samples can be kept chilled at refrigerator temperature for a few days, usually 3-5. Samples which have degraded beyond the ability for us to test will be discarded. **DON'T FREEZE samples.**

6. I want the head and antlers for mounting. Can you remove the sample while I wait and then give me the head?

No. All heads and associated appendages will be destroyed as laboratory waste after the samples have been removed. You may saw the antlers off prior to submitting the head for testing or use taxidermist services in your area. Antlers cannot be removed on laboratory premises.

7. My deer was shot in the head. Can it be tested?

The only way to find out is to submit the head for testing.

8. I think I can remove the retropharyngeal lymph nodes and obex myself. Can I just send those, rather than the entire head?

No, properly collected tissue samples are important to get a valid result. Alternatively, search for certified CWD technicians, who may be able to assist with collections. The information can be found under online services on www.agriculture.state.pa.us by county/zip.

9. How will I be notified and when can I expect results?

Submitters must indicate how results are to be reported (FAX, US mail or email) on the submission form. Results are generally available in two to three weeks after receipt of the head. Turnaround time may vary depending upon the volume of sample submissions.

10. Are the test results confidential?

No, the result information is shared with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, a state agency.

11. Does a negative, or not detected, test result mean that my venison is safe to eat? This is not a food safety test. Failure to find abnormal prions in the tissue examined does not mean that the tested deer is absolutely free of CWD prions or safe to consume. All laboratory tests for CWD assess only the presence or absence of prions in the specific tissue examined, at the time the tissue was collected, and at a level detectable by the assay being used.

12. Where can I find more information about CWD?

Website: www.agriculture.state.pa.us and www.PGC.state.pa.us