

## **AGENDA**

Board of Wildlife Resources  
Wildlife and Boat Committee  
7870 Villa Park Drive  
Henrico, Virginia 23228

March 18, 2026  
10:00 am

Committee Members: Mr. Jon Cooper, Chair, Mr. James Edmunds, Vice Chair, Ms. Laura Walters, Mr. Lynwood Broaddus (Alternate), Mr. Will Wampler (Alternate)

DWR Staff Liaisons: Mr. Michael Lipford, Dr. Mike Bednarski, Ms. Stacey Brown, and Ms. Amy Martin

1. Call to Order and Welcome  
Mr. Cooper
2. Approval of the January 21, 2026, Committee Meeting Minutes **Final Action**  
Mr. Cooper
3. Public Comment – Non - Agenda Item  
Mr. Cooper
4. Migratory Bird Regulations & Bag Limit Proposals **Final Action**  
Mr. Ben Lewis
5. Public Scoping Period – Sportfishing, Boating, and Nongame  
Dr. Mike Bednarski, Ms. Stacey Brown, Ms. Amy Martin
6. CWD Plan  
Dr. John Tracey and Ms. Alexandra Lombard
7. Wildlife Division Update  
Mr. Michael Lipford

8. Fish Division Update  
Dr. Mike Bednarski
9. Boating Division Update  
Ms. Stacey Brown
10. Nongame Program Update  
Ms. Amy Martin
11. Director's Report  
Mr. Ryan Brown
12. Chair's Report  
Mr. Cooper
13. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, May 21, 2026  
Mr. Cooper
14. Additional Business/Comments  
Mr. Cooper
15. Adjournment  
Mr. Cooper

Draft Meeting Minutes  
Wildlife and Boat Committee  
Board of Wildlife Resources  
7870 Villa Park Drive – Board Room  
Henrico, VA 23228

January 21, 2026  
10:00 am

**Present:** Mr. Jon Cooper, **Chair**, Mr. James Edmunds, **Vice Chair**, Ms. Laura Walters, Mr. Will Wampler (alternate), Mr. Lynwood Broaddus (alternate); **Board Members** in attendance: Ms. Marlee Dance, Mr. Parker Slaybaugh, Mr. George Terwilliger, Mr. Michael Formica, Mr. Woody Woodall, **Executive Director:** Mr. Ryan Brown; **Deputy Directors:** Ms. Becky Gwynn and Mr. Darin Moore; **Director's Working Group:** Dr. Mike Bednarski, Ms. Stacey Brown, Mr. George Braxton, Mr. Michael Lipford, Ms. Shelby Crouch, Mr. Bob Smet, Mr. Paul Kugelman, Ms. Rebecca Lane (virtual)

The Committee Chair called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and welcomed everyone. The Chair noted for the record that a Quorum was present for today's meeting.

**Approval of the October 22, 2025, Committee Meeting Minutes:**

The Chair called for a motion to approve the October 22, 2025, Wildlife and Boat Committee minutes. Mr. Edmunds made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2025, committee meeting. Ms. Walters seconded the motion. Ayes: Cooper, Edmunds, Walters, Wampler, Broaddus

Deputy Director Becky Gwynn handled the Public Comments.

**Public Comment - Non-Agenda Item:** The Chair called for Public Comment – Non-Agenda Items.

- Gary Kimberlin spoke regarding dog hunting (virtual)
- Jessica Sickinger spoke regarding dog hunting (virtual)
- Justin Updyke spoke regarding Drones for Deer Herd Analysis (person)

**Migratory Bird Regulations & Bag Limit Proposal:** Mr. Cooper called on Mr. Ben Lewis for a presentation.

Mr. Lewis gave a presentation on the Migratory Bird Regulations & Bag Limit Proposals.

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Mr. Lewis for his presentation of the Migratory Bird Regulations and Bag Limit Proposal.

The Chair called for a motion, Mr. Edmunds made a motion, I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee approve the preliminary 2026-2027 Migratory Game Bird Season and Bag Limit recommendations as presented by staff, for consideration by the full Board at the January 22, 2026, meeting. It was second by Mr. Cooper. Ayes: Cooper, Edmunds, Wampler, Walters, Broaddus.

**Smallmouth Bass Management Plan:** Mr. Cooper called on Dr. Mike Bednarski for a presentation.

Dr. Bednarski presented the Smallmouth Bass Management Plan.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Bednarski for his presentation on the Smallmouth Bass Management Plan.

The Chair called for a Final motion, Mr. Edmunds made a motion, Mr. Chair, I move that the Wildlife and Boat Committee of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources recommend the Smallmouth Bass Management Plan for endorsement by the Full Board. It was seconded by Mr. Cooper. Ayes: Cooper, Edmunds, Walters, Broaddus, Wampler

**EPA Grant Update:** Mr. Cooper called on Mr. David Norris for an Update.

Mr. Norris presented an Update on the EPA Grant.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Norris for his Update.

**Annual Reports to USCG:** The Chair called on Ms. Stacey Brown for a presentation.

Ms. Brown presented the Annual Report of the USCG.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Ms. Brown for her presentation.

**Virginia's Second Breeding Bird Atlas: A Citizen Science Informed Conservation Tool:**

The Chair called on Ms. Amy Martin for presentation.

Ms. Martin gave an update on Virginia's Second Breeding Bird Atlas.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Ms. Martin for her presentation.

**Wildlife Division Report:** The Chair called on Mr. Michael Lipford for a Wildlife Division Report.

Mr. Lipford reported:

Staff from the wildlife health, deer, & elk teams have been working on revisions to DWR's 5-year chronic wasting disease management plan. A draft of the revised plan has been shared with DWR's internal CWD Committee for review. That committee will meet in early February to discuss revisions and feedback. Our intention is to provide an overview of this new CWD plan during the March Wildlife and Boat Committee meeting.

At the March Board meeting we will also provide CWD testing results. We are still finalizing CWD samples including those from statewide taxidermists. Thus far we have no confirmed positives that would change our current management practices for the disease.

Avian influenza continues to affect black vulture populations in sporadic locations throughout the state. Additionally, over the past month there has been some low-level AI-related mortality in geese in eastern and northern parts of the state.

On the morning of December 27<sup>th</sup>, 150-200 grackles were found dead on or near the Hwy 17/360 bridge over Hoskins Creek in Tappahannock. A subset of birds was sent to the National Wildlife Health Center and results only found blunt force trauma. Influenza testing was negative. It appears that something spooked a large flock or roost of mostly grackles, leading to accidental collisions with the bridge.

## **DEER**

### 10-year Deer Management Plan Revision is ....

- underway internally and external stakeholder participation will begin this in April/May. Tentative timeline is to complete the plan later next year (2027).
- DWR Deer Technical Committee held its first meeting on the new Deer Plan in December and began developing lists of deer management issues and potential Stakeholder Advisory Committee members.
- I am still hoping to fund a cultural carrying capacity survey that was cut from last year's budget. This helps update deer population objectives. May have to use results from last survey done in 2014.

### Southeast Deer Study Group

- DWR is hosting the 49<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Southeast Deer Study Group at the Hotel Roanoke in Roanoke, VA February 22-24. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting we've hosted, included the first one at Fort Pickett in 1977. This meeting brings together ~ 300 deer biologists,

researchers, and managers from across the southeast to share research and ideas and to discuss current challenges to deer management.

I'll report **Preliminary Big Game harvest information from last hunting season (official harvest Press Release will be done in February – still have ongoing late seasons for deer and turkey)**

### **For Deer ....**

- 227,302 total deer reported through January 3<sup>rd</sup>, including special September seasons
- This is Up about 10% from last year and 14% above the 10-year average
- 
- Most deer killed in a year since 2013
- Most bucks since 2009
- Highest percent female since 2014 -- % female up: 45.5% this year vs 44.6% last year
- Harvest did increase WBR where we extended seasons\*, but harvest was ahead of last year's pace all season long, so we cannot attribute harvest results to those extended seasons alone.
- Unsure at this point why harvest was up this year. Harvest typically declines in good mast years.

### **BEAR Preliminary harvest data...**

- ~ 2350 bear reported, which is down ~ 15% from last year (expected due to season reductions in mange counties), but we might have expected an even larger drop during a good mast year)
- In mange counties, total harvest dropped an average of 33% from previous year and 39% from previous 3-year average
- In those counties, female harvest dropped an average of 37% from previous year and 43% from previous 3-year average; our target reduction was 60-65% female harvest reduction in these areas- moving in right direction
- Some harvest pressure may have shifted to peripheral counties; e.g., Fluvanna was up 60% from the previous year and Roanoke Co. was up 68%. Other periphery counties did not show significant increases (e.g., Craig, Giles). Hunt earlier
- Harvest increases were seen in Southside, especially in the 4 counties where season was expanded: Charlotte, Halifax, Prince Edward, and Mecklenburg. The total harvest increased 17% from previous year and 43% from previous 3-year average. Just changed the seasons in these four

Mange\* (reported on this at the Mange Plan at October meeting)

- Total reports during 2025: 346, up from 274 reports in 2024
- # of Counties with Mange Reports: 42 (43% of VA counties)

- Bear program provided kits to bear hunters in different parts of the state and would like to thank them for their assistance gathering samples. (SE and SW baseline)

## **TURKEY**

### Very Preliminary harvest

- Fall season is still ongoing (ends January 24) but has been trending down again this year across the state. Estimate 1000 this year, ~ 1400 in 2024.
- This continued decline in fall harvest over the years can largely be attributed to declining participation in the fall seasons and hunters choosing to save tags for spring seasons.
- However, poor reproduction this past season could have been a contributing factor. Except for the Coalfield counties in SW VA, we experienced very low turkey recruitment during 2025 judging from brood surveys.

### Fall turkey season work group

- Staff are assembling a fall turkey hunting workgroup to evaluate current season structure in time to make recommendations for the regulatory review process next fall. Per the turkey plan, the main purpose is to develop a simplified fall season structure that diversifies opportunity by hunters in the fall. The initial meeting will likely be scheduled for mid-February.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Mr. Lipford for his report.

**Fish Division Report:** The Chair called on Dr. Mike Bednarski for a Fish Division Update.

Dr. Bednarski reported:

DWR's is seeking public input on potential changes to existing fishing, boating and nongame regulations during the regulatory scoping period. The scoping period began on January 15th and will run through February 14th. Constituents can submit electronic comments through DWR's website. This is the first step in the regulatory process which happens every other year. Comments will be presented to the Wildlife and Boat Committee on March 18th and draft regulations will be presented on May 20th. These regulations would be adopted in August and go into effect on January 1st, 2027.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Dr. Bednarski for his report.

**Boating Division Update:** The Chair called on Ms. Stacey Brown for a Boating Division Update.

Ms. Brown reported:

I already shared some facts and figures during my earlier presentation, but here are some more as we tally up our impact during last year – 2025. Our customer service section handled over 90,000 calls and transactions with the agency’s constituents. In addition, we responded to over 14,000 emails. We had over 23,000 constituents take a boating safety course in 2025. Finally – we recorded 75 boating incidents with 10 fatalities. When I first started working for the agency, just as we were beginning to phase-in the boating education requirement, our average number of annual boating fatalities was around 20. Since the phase-in of the boating education requirement was completed in 2016, the average number of annual boating fatalities has dropped to 16.

As Mike Bednarski mentioned, we are gearing up for the public scoping period regarding boating regulations. Staff is working to identify items that need to be addressed in regulation in addition to any issues brought up through the public scoping period.

The only other item I wanted to mention during this report is a status of our waterway management program, and in particular regulatory markers. I mentioned back in August that we hired Travis Park who had recently retired from serving over 20 years in the Coast Guard. Travis has been hard at work on updating the procedures for the inspection of regulatory buoys as well as ensuring the data we have on the regulatory buoys is accurate. This work is taking us closer to our goal of providing accurate maps to the public of no wake zones and other regulatory markers by the end of 2026.

After comments and questions, The Chair thanked Ms. Brown for her update.

**Non-game Program Update:** The Chair called on Ms. Amy Martin for a Non-game Program Update.

Ms. Martin reported:

- **Bat Hibernacula Counts** – We started winter hibernacula counts the week of January 5<sup>th</sup> by surveying 10 caves in Highland and Bath counties. DWR and our partner states

within the range of these rare, threatened, and endangered species conduct these surveys every other year. The data, which provide winter population trend information are shared with the USFWS to inform species status assessments that in turn inform species listing and delisting. This year Rick's survey crew included staff from DWR's Environmental Services Program, our Furbearer Biologist, biologists from Radford University, DCR's Natural Heritage Program, and the US Forest Service. While data analysis is yet to be performed, it appears as though species numbers are stable or slightly declining. We plan to survey a total of 42 caves during this survey season.

- **Purple sandpiper surveys** - We started boat and land surveys on the lower Eastern Shore and around Hampton Roads for Purple Sandpiper. This species overwinters along rocky shorelines from Atlantic Canada to the southeast US. The goal of these surveys is to generate population and trend estimates across the flyway and learn whether the local declines are driven by flyway-scale declines or if birds are redistributing along the flyway in response to some environmental condition. Each survey site is visited once a month, Jan-Mar. During our January surveys, we found 13 Purple Sandpipers in Cape Charles harbor, and 8 on the riprap at the HRBT islands.
- **Bald and Golden Eagle trapping** – Golden eagles are migrating through Virginia as they head south from Canada and our Bald Eagles are settling into nesting season. DWR staff are trapping eagles and fitting them with transmitters so we can study their migration patterns and habitat use in Virginia, drawing blood from the eagles for disease monitoring and health assessments, and keeping an eye on productivity levels. These data not only help us determine how healthy our eagle populations are, where they are located and what habitats they use, they also inform activities such as Bird Air Strike Hazard mitigation at our airfields and airports and how things like wind energy may impact their populations.

After comments and questions, the Chair thanked Ms. Martin for her update.

**Director's Report:** The Chair called on Mr. Ryan Brown for a Director's report.

The Director reported:

- CWD measures we take are common with other states
- Grant money is available and DWR looks very closely at these Grants to see which are better suited for our Agency

**Chair's Report:** The Chair thanked all staff for their tremendous work that we continue to see. The Chair asked if there were any additional business or comments, hearing none, he announced the next meeting to be Wednesday, March 18, 2026, and adjourned the meeting at 12:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Frances Boswell  
/s/

# VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

2026-27

## MIGRATORY GAME BIRD HUNTING SEASONS – FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS



Prepared by Wildlife Division  
January 2026

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

PRELIMINARY FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS AND STAFF PROPOSALS FOR 2026-27  
MIGRATORY GAMEBIRD SEASON DATES AND BAG LIMITS

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# **Doves**

## **Mourning Dove Background Information and Population Status**

There are three dove management units (or flyways) across the country, including the Eastern (EMU), Central (CMU) and Western (WMU) Management Units. Virginia is in the EMU.

- Population trends in the EMU:
  - 10-yr (2016-2025): Stabilized population trend.
  - Long term (1966-2025): Historically declining population trend.
- Dove Banding Project – Annual program since 2003 to leg-band over 500 doves annually in VA, and 33,000 nationwide. Data used to provide estimates of movements, survival and harvest rates, and is the main monitoring program used to develop annual hunting regulations.
- Harvest Strategy: Revised Harvest Strategy adopted in 2014 allows for a standard dove hunting season of 90 days with a bag limit of 15 birds/day when appropriate.
- Data from HIP (past 3-yr avg.): Hunters = 19,160 Harvest = 247,462

## **Recent Seasons**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days until extended to 90 days in 2014-15)</u>		
2025-2026	Sept. 1 – Oct. 19	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 19 – Jan. 19
2024-2025	Sept. 2 – Oct. 20	Nov. 23 – Dec. 01	Dec. 20 – Jan. 20
2023-2024	Sept. 2 – Oct. 22	Nov. 18 – Nov. 26	Dec. 22 – Jan. 20
2022-2023	Sept. 3 – Oct. 23	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 23 – Jan. 21
2021-2022	Sept. 4 – Oct. 27	Nov. 20 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 17
2020-2021	Sept. 5 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 19
2019-2020	Sept. 2 – Oct. 27	Nov. 27 – Dec. 4	Dec. 24 – Jan. 18
2018-2019	Sept. 1 – Oct. 28	Nov. 21 – Nov. 28	Dec. 22 – Jan. 14
2017-2018	Sept. 2 – Oct. 29	Nov. 22 – Nov. 29	Dec. 23 – Jan. 15
2016-2017	Sept. 3 – Oct. 30	Nov. 19 – Nov. 27	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2015-2016	Sept. 5 – Nov. 1	Nov. 21 – Nov. 29	Dec. 24 – Jan. 15
2014-2015	Sept. 1 – Oct. 31	Nov. 22 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 15
2013-2014	Sept. 2 – Oct. 14	Oct. 19 – Nov. 2	Dec. 31 – Jan. 11
2012-2013	Sept. 1 – Oct. 13	Oct. 17 – Oct. 27	Dec. 28 – Jan. 12
2011-2012	Sept. 3 – Oct. 10	Oct. 25 – Nov. 5	Dec. 26 - Jan. 14
2010-2011	Sept. 4 – Oct. 11	Oct. 20 – Nov. 6	Dec. 27 – Jan. 8
2009-2010	Sept. 5 - 26	Oct. 7 – Nov. 7	Dec. 25 – Jan. 9
2008-2009	Sept. 1 - 27	Oct. 4 – Oct. 31	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10
2007-2008	Sept. 1 – 29	Oct. 5 – Oct 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 12
2006-2007	Sept. 2 – 23	Oct. 7 – Nov. 4	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2005-2006	Sept. 3 – 24	Oct. 8 – Nov. 5	Dec. 27 – Jan. 14
2004-2005	Sept. 4 – 25	Oct. 9 – Nov. 6	Dec. 28 – Jan. 15
2003-2004	Sept. 1 – 27	Oct. 8 – Nov. 8	Dec. 31 – Jan. 10
2002-2003	Sept. 2 - 28	Oct. 9 – Nov. 9	Jan. 1 – Jan. 11
2001-2002	Sept. 1 - 29	Oct 13 – Nov. 10	Dec. 29 – Jan. 9

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**DOVE**

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**FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027  
Hunting dates may run consecutively or be split into no more than three (3) segments.

**SEASON LENGTH:** Not more than 90 days.

**BAG LIMIT:** 15 daily and 45 in possession. Daily bag limit can be composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

**SHOOTING HOURS:** Between ½ hour before sunrise and sunset daily (State may select ½ day shooting in any segment).

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**SEASON DATES:** September 5 - October 24 (50 days)  
November 21 - November 29 (9 days)  
December 19 - January 18 (31 days)

**SHOOTING HOURS:** September 5 Noon until sunset  
September 6 – October 24 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.  
November 21 – November 29 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.  
December 19 - January 18 ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

**BAG LIMIT:** 15 daily and 45 in possession. Composed of mourning doves and white-winged doves, singly or in combination

# Rails

## Background Information and Population Status

- **Harvest** – Comprised predominantly of clapper rails (85%), some sora (14%), and small number of Virginia rails taken. Clappers are mostly local VA birds, some are migrants from NY, NJ, and other coastal states.
- **Nesting** - Clapper rails nest from May through June, with re-nesting in July/August. Late nesting rails have broods that do not reach flight stage until August or September. This occurs in years when 1<sup>st</sup> nests are flooded by spring storms/tides and re-nests contribute significantly to production. Therefore, we generally wait until the second week of September to open the hunting season. The key to setting the season is to bracket the greatest number of high tides possible.
- **Harvest Data** - Avg. No. hunters = 290, Avg. Harvest = 3,300 (HIP, past 5-yr avg.)

## Past Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 70 days)</u>	
2025	Sept. 6 – Oct. 25	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30
2024	Sept. 14 – Nov. 3	Nov. 13 – Dec. 1
2023	Sept. 11 – Nov. 5	Nov. 13 – Nov. 26
2022	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2021	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2020	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2019	Sept. 7 – Nov. 15	
2018	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2017	Sept. 9 – Nov. 17	
2016	Sept. 10 - Nov. 18	
2015	Sept. 8 - Nov. 16	
2014	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2013	Sept. 7 - 28	Sept. 30 – Nov. 16
2012	Sept. 8 – 29	Oct. 1 – Nov. 17
2011	Sept. 10 – Oct. 1	Oct. 3 – Nov. 19
2010	Sept. 8 – Oct. 2	Oct. 4 – Nov. 17
2009	Sept. 8 – Oct. 3	Oct. 5 – Nov. 17
2008	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2007	Sept. 10 – Nov. 17	
2006	Sept. 8 – Nov. 16	
2005	Sept. 12 – Nov. 19	
2004	Sept. 13 – Nov. 20	
2003	Sept. 10 – Nov. 18	
2002	Sept. 9 - Nov. 16	
2001	Sept. 11 – Nov. 19	
2000	Sept. 13 – Oct. 2	Oct. 11 – Nov. 29

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## **RAILS (Clapper, King, Sora, Virginia) & Gallinules (Common, Purple)**

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### **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

**SEASON LENGTH:** 70 days, straight or 2 segments.

**DAILY BAG LIMIT:** Clapper/King - 15, in aggregate.  
Sora/Virginia - 25, in aggregate.  
Gallinules - 15, in aggregate.

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**SEASON DATES:** September 5 – October 24 (50 days)  
November 10 – November 29 (20 days)

**DAILY BAG LIMIT:** Clapper/King: **10** - in aggregate, only 1 can be a King Rail.  
Sora/Virginia: 25 - in aggregate.  
Gallinules: 15 - in aggregate.

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

**NOTES:** - This recommendation provides 30 days of 3-ft or greater lunar tides.  
- Non-Toxic shot is required for Rail, Snipe and Gallinule hunting in Virginia.

# **Woodcock**

## **Background Information and Population Status**

- Harvest Strategy includes 3 regulatory options (Liberal, Moderate and Restrictive). Annual regulation based on the 3-year mean of the call count survey. For 2026-27, Harvest Strategy calls for Moderate Regulations (45 days/3 birds).
- Singing-ground survey (SGS) in Eastern Management Region from most recent survey:
  - 1 year trend (2024-2025): 0.72% decrease
  - 10 year trend (2015-2025): 0.05% decline per year.
  - Long-term (1968-2025): 0.74% decline per year.
- The 2024 recruitment index for the U.S. portion of the Eastern Region (1.14 jv/ad female) was 25% less than the 2023 index and 29.5% lower than the long-term index.
- Research suggests that habitat loss is the major factor of the long-term population decline.
- Virginia participated in a Flyway-wide study of woodcock movements and habitat use for the past several years. GPS transmitters are tracking woodcock migration routes and chronology, and this data is being used to better inform woodcock management strategies and hunting seasons.
- Federal regulations prohibit zones for woodcock hunting, however, we are permitted to split the season into two segments. In Virginia, this allows us to provide both early and late opportunities for hunters across the state.

### **Recent Seasons** (bag limit has been 3 birds)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u>		<u>Days</u>
2025-2026	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30	Dec. 26 – Jan. 19	45
2024-2025	Nov. 11 – Nov. 30	Dec. 27 – Jan. 20	45
2023-2024	Nov. 10 – Nov. 27	Dec. 26 – Jan. 21	45
2022-2023	Nov. 11 – Dec. 3	Dec. 27 – Jan. 17	45
2021-2022	Nov. 11 – Dec. 8	Dec. 27 – Jan. 12	45
2020-2021	Nov. 7 – Nov. 30	Dec. 24 – Jan. 13	45
2019-2020	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2018-2019	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 8 – Jan. 14	45
2017-2018	Nov. 20 – Dec. 8	Dec. 21 – Jan. 15	45
2016-2017	Oct. 29 – Nov. 4	Dec. 9 – Jan. 15	45
2015-2016	Nov. 23 – Dec. 5	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2014-2015	Nov. 24 – Dec. 6	Dec. 15 – Jan. 15	45
2013-2014	Oct. 26 – Nov. 1	Dec. 5 – Jan. 11	45
2012-2013	Oct. 27 – Nov. 2	Dec. 6 – Jan. 12	45
2011-2012	Oct. 29 – Nov. 12	Dec. 16 – Jan. 14	45
2010-2011	Oct. 30 – Nov. 13	Dec. 27 – Jan. 10	30
2009-2010	Nov. 7 – 21	Dec. 26 – Jan. 9	30
2008-2009	Nov. 8 – 22	Dec. 20 – Jan. 3	30
2007-2008	Oct. 27 – Nov. 10	Dec. 22 – Jan. 5	30
2006-2007	Nov. 4 – 18	Dec. 23 – Jan. 6	30
2005-2006	Nov. 12 – 26	Dec. 17 – Dec. 31	30

Avg. No. hunters = 3,200. Avg. Harvest = 5,500 (Estimates for 2024-2025 Season.)

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# WOODCOCK

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 13, 2026 - January 31, 2027

**SEASON LENGTH:** 45 days, straight or 2 segments.

**BAG LIMIT:** 3 daily, 9 in possession.

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset daily.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**SEASON DATES:** November 11 – December 1 (21 days)  
December 26 – January 18 (24 days)

**BAG LIMIT:** 3 daily, 9 in possession

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

# Snipe

## Background Information

- Season generally set to overlap duck season. There are relatively few snipe hunters in VA and most snipe are taken opportunistically by other migratory bird hunters.
- Harvest Data (HIP, past 5-yr avg.): No. hunters = 225, Harvest = 550

## Recent Seasons

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates (all 107 days)</u>	
2025-2026	Sept. 29 – Nov. 30	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2024-2025	Sept. 30 – Dec. 1	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2023-2024	Sept. 25 – Nov. 26	Dec. 19 – Jan. 31
2022-2023	Sept. 26 – Nov. 27	Dec. 17 – Jan. 29
2021-2022	Oct. 8 – Oct. 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2020-2021	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2019-2020	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2018-2019	Oct. 5 – Oct. 8	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2017-2018	Oct. 6 – Oct. 9	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2016-2017	Oct. 7 – Oct. 10	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2015-2016	Oct. 9 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2014-2015	Oct. 10 – Oct. 13	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2013-2014	Oct. 11 – Oct. 14	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2012-2013	Oct. 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2011-2012	Oct. 6 – Oct. 10	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2010-2011	Oct. 7 – Oct. 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2009-2010	Oct. 8 – Oct. 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 30
2008-2009	Oct. 9 – Oct. 13	Oct. 22 – Jan.31
2007-2008	Oct 4 – Oct. 8	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2006-2007	Oct 4 – Oct. 9	Oct. 23 – Jan. 31
2005-2006	Oct 5 – Oct.10	Oct. 24 – Jan. 31
2004-2005	Oct 7 – Oct 11	Oct. 22 – Jan. 31
2003-2004	Oct. 8 – Oct 11	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2002-2003	Oct 9 – Oct 12	Oct. 21 – Jan. 31
2001-2002	Oct. 10 - Oct. 13	Oct. 22 - Jan. 31
2000-2001	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1999-2000	Oct. 6 - Oct. 9	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1998-1999	Oct. 7 - Oct. 10	Oct. 20 - Jan. 30
1997-1998	Oct. 8 - Oct. 11	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1996-1997	Oct. 9 - Oct. 12	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31
1995-1996	Oct. 11 - Oct. 14	Oct. 21 - Jan. 31

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# SNIFE

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

SEASON LENGTH: 107 days, straight or 2 segments

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

SEASON DATES: September 28 – November 29 (63 days)  
December 19 – January 31 (44 days)

BAG LIMIT: 8 daily, 24 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise until sunset

# SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON FACT SHEET - 2026

- Special teal seasons were initiated in late 1960's to provide harvest opportunities on blue-winged and green-winged teal. When the blue-winged teal breeding population (BPOP) is above 3.3 million, a 9-day season can be offered. If the BPOP exceeds 4.7 million, a 16-day season can be offered. The blue-winged teal BPOP estimate for 2025 is 4.4 million which corresponds to a 9-day teal season for the 2026-2027 hunting season.
- Blue-winged teal are one of the earliest migrants. Many pass through Virginia from late August through October, prior to the opening of the late duck season.
- Green-winged teal are also early migrants and arrive in September and October. However, some Green-wings remain through the winter depending on weather conditions.
- Virginia has held a special September teal season since 1999 (see dates listed below). The season was initially held only in the area east of I-95 because there are greater numbers of teal and teal hunters in the coastal plain. Even in the coastal plain, teal are not widespread, and the harvest has been relatively small. The season was expanded in 2011 to provide some teal hunting opportunity in the area west of I-95.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>East of I-95</u>	<u>Season Dates</u> <u>West of I-95</u>
2025	Sept. 20 – 28	Sept. 23 - 28
2024	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2023	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2022	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2021	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2020	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2019	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2018	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2017	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2016	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2015	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 21 - 30
2014	Sept. 17 – 30	Sept. 22 - 30
2013	Sept. 16 – 30	Sept. 23 - 30
2012	Sept. 17 – 29	Sept. 24 - 29
2011	Sept. 19 – 30	Sept. 26 - 30
2010	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2009	Sept. 21 – 30	na
2008	Sept. 20 – 30	na
2007	Sept. 17 – 26	na
2006	Sept. 15 – 25	na
2005	Sept. 16 – 24	na
2004	Sept. 16 – 25	na
2003	Sept. 13 – 23	na
2002	Sept. 14 – 24	na

Average Annual Harvest: 600 teal

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# SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OUTSIDE DATES:** September 1 – September 30, 2026

**SEASON LENGTH:** Up to 9 days

**BAG LIMIT:** 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only)

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**SEASON DATES:** September 19 – September 27  
**HUNT AREA:** East of I – 95

September 22 – September 27  
**HUNT AREA:** West of I – 95

**BAG LIMIT:** 6 daily, 18 in possession (Blue-winged and Green-winged teal only).

**SHOOTING HOURS:** ½ hour before sunrise to sunset

## **FACT SHEET - Waterfowl Hunters and Harvests – 2026**

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- Liberal duck seasons (60 days, 6 bird bag limit) and resident goose seasons have resulted in high waterfowl harvests in Virginia during the past ten years. Harvest has averaged ~151,993 ducks and ~41,855 Canada geese from 2022-2024, compared to 114,770 ducks and 25,000 geese during the 1990's. The long season length and liberal bags offer greater opportunity and a greater cumulative harvest over the course of the season.
- Waterfowl hunter numbers in Virginia have been generally stable since the late 1990's. Since 1999, the Harvest Information Program (HIP) has been used to estimate hunter effort and harvest. The average number of duck and goose hunters over the past 3 years, as measured by HIP, was 16,800 and 10,555 respectively.
- Conditions during the 2024-2025 season were colder for most of the season but puddle duck harvest was lower than the previous year. Buffleheads were the most harvested duck in Virginia, followed by mallards, green-winged teal, black ducks and gadwall.

## FACT SHEET - The Status of Ducks - 2026

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- Waterfowl harvest in the Atlantic flyway is managed by the stocks of four different species of eastern waterfowl populations (wood ducks, American green-winged teal, ring-necked ducks and goldeneyes). In 2025 estimated breeding population size for wood ducks was 0.95 million (SE = 0.12 million), 0.34 million (SE = 0.08 million) for American green-winged teal, 0.76 million (SE = 0.18 million) for ring-necked ducks and 0.72 million (SE = 0.24 million) for goldeneyes.
- The total 2025 mid-continent mallard breeding population is predicted to be 6.56 million (SE = 0.26 million)

**Virginia:** Habitat conditions in Virginia during the spring of 2025 were average with slightly drier conditions towards the end of the breeding season that could have potentially impacted brood rearing habitat.

- The 2025 Virginia breeding pair estimate for mallards (15,100) was lower than last year (21,033). Estimated black duck pairs (64) decreased from last year (629). The number of Wood duck pairs (6,245) was lower than last year (9,259). The breeding pair estimate for Canada geese (25,230) was also lower than the 2023 estimate (44,516).

### Mallard Bag Limit in the Atlantic Flyway

The mallard has been one of the most abundant duck species in eastern North America. However, mallard numbers in the Northeastern U.S. declined about 40% from the late 1990's through around 2019. About 60% of the mallards harvested in Atlantic Flyway states, and around 80% of those harvested in Virginia, are derived from the Northeastern U.S. Mallard numbers in Eastern Canada were stable or slightly increasing during this same time period, but overall, the breeding mallard population in eastern North America had declined. This decline prompted waterfowl managers to enact harvest restriction on mallards in the Atlantic Flyway in 2019. The bag limit was reduced from 4 to 2 mallards daily, with a limit of 1 hen mallard. Those restrictions were in place for the past 4 hunting seasons.

Since 2019, Eastern Mallard numbers have increase 15%. In addition, a new Eastern Mallard Harvest Strategy and Population Model was developed based on recent population dynamics. This Strategy was put in place for 2023-2024 hunting season regulation process, and allows for a return to a 4-mallard bag limit (2 hens). Projections from the new harvest strategy indicate that under current conditions, Atlantic Flyway regulations should allow for a liberal mallard bag limit (4 mallards total, only 2 hens) around 80% of the time.

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## YOUTH and VETERANS WATERFOWL DAYS

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### Guidelines for the Youth Days and Veterans Days include:

1. States may select 2 days per duck-hunting zone, designated as "Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days," in addition to their regular duck seasons. States may also select 2 days per duck-hunting zone designated as "Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Days" in addition to their regular duck seasons. The Youth and Veterans days could be combined and held on the same day or could be held separately.
2. Youth Days must be held outside of any regular duck season on a weekend, holidays, or other non-school days when youth hunters would have the maximum opportunity to participate.
3. Youth and Veterans Days could be held up to 14 days before or after any regular duck season frameworks or within any split of a regular duck season.
4. The daily bag limit is the same as that allowed in the regular season and includes ducks, mergansers, coots, moorhens, gallinules, 1 Canada geese (except in Canada Goose Zones where the bag limit is higher), and 1 tundra swan (if the hunter possesses a tundra swan permit). Flyway species restrictions remain in effect.
5. Youth hunters must be 15 years of age or younger. Youth 12 years of age and older will need a valid Virginia state hunting license. A licensed adult at least 18 years of age or older must accompany youth hunters into the field. This adult may not duck hunt but may participate in other open seasons.
6. Those allowed to participate in the special **Veterans Days** include Veterans (as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code) and members of the Armed Forces on active duty, including members of the National Guard and Reserves on active duty (other than for training).

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# DUCKS

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

**Outside Dates:** September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027

**Season Length:** 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunt Days.

**Bag Limits:** **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:**  
Can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks, 2 canvasbacks, scaup: 1/day for 40 days and 2/day for 20 days, 2 redheads, 3 pintails, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, 4 total sea ducks (no more than 3 scoters, 3 eider (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks). Closed season on harlequin duck. Possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

**Split Season Options:** 3-way split season, no zones

**Shooting Hours:** 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

**Season Length:** 60 hunting days; plus 2 Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Hunting Day

**Season Dates:** October 9 - 12 (Black Duck closed) (4 Days)  
November 18 – November 29 (12 Days)  
December 19 – January 31 (44 Days)  
October 24, February 6 – Youth/Veterans Waterfowl Days

**Bag Limit:** **Daily Bag limit of 6 ducks, with the following restrictions:** can include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 black ducks (except closed Oct. 9–12), 2 redheads, 2 canvasbacks, 3 pintails, 1 mottled duck, 1 fulvous whistling duck, scaup: 1/day from October 9-12, November 18-November 29, December 19 - January 11, and 2/day from January 12-31. Sea Ducks: 4 total sea ducks to include no more than 3 scoters, 3 eiders (only 1 hen), 3 long-tailed ducks. Closed season on harlequin ducks. The possession limit is three times the daily bag limit.

**Shooting Hours:** 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

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# MERGANSER AND COOT

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## MERGANSER

### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

#### Option A

Season Length: 60 hunting days.  
Outside Date: September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027.  
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily.  
15 in possession.

#### Option B

To be included into the general duck bag. If included in the general duck bag, the restriction on 2 hooded mergansers would apply.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Option A

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season  
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily, 15 in possession.

## AMERICAN COOT

### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

Season Length: 60 hunting days  
Outside Date: September 27, 2026 - January 31, 2027  
Bag Limit: 15 birds daily (45 in possession)

### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Season Dates: To coincide with general duck season.  
Bag Limit: 15 daily (45 in possession)

## **FACT SHEET - The Status of Resident Canada Geese - 2026**

- The resident Canada goose population increased significantly in Virginia during the 1980's and 1990's, and peaked at 260,000 geese in the late 1990's. This population caused significant conflicts with human and wildlife populations, and management actions were taken to reduce their numbers. The current population estimate is 158,605 (+/- 25%) in Virginia and over 1 million in the Atlantic Flyway.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons were initiated in 1993 to help manage this population and to provide recreational opportunities for hunters. These seasons occur prior to the arrival of most migrant geese (~Sept. 25 in Virginia), or in areas where there are fewer migrant geese. The Federal Framework allows Virginia to conduct a statewide September Resident Goose season from September 1-25.
- There are fewer migrant geese in the western portion of Virginia, and special “Goose Hunting Zones” have been established that allow more liberal seasons in areas with a greater percentage of resident geese.
- Special resident goose hunting seasons have been very popular and have increased hunter participation and resident goose harvests. These seasons have been very effective in managing resident goose populations and helping to meet our statewide population objectives.
- In areas where hunting is not feasible, other options including special Depredation Orders for Airports, Agricultural areas, and Nest and Egg removal have been implemented to help manage resident goose conflicts.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population Estimate *</b>	<b>September Harvest</b>
2024	143,529 +/- 29%	n/a
2023	161,747 +/- 24%	n/a
2022	170,540 +/-26%	3,300
2021	177,056 +/-29%	6,300
2020	163,198 +/- 24%	13,000
2019	125,966 +/-20%	6,300
2018	132,633 +/- 24%	5,600
2017	142,167 +/- 21%	5,500
2016	158,200 +/- 19%	900
2015	150,651 +/- 22%	6,100
2014	130,503 +/- 26%	7,500
2013	144,910 +/- 26%	10,700
2012	158,267 +/- 28%	9,700
2011	165,022 +/- 28%	14,700
2010	147,313 +/- 29%	15,600
2009	145,019 +/- 29%	16,800
2008	157,560 +/- 29%	17,500
2007	154,030 +/- 27%	13,600
2006	136,700 +/- 27%	11,100
2005	129,486 +/- 26%	10,100
2004	143,741 +/- 25%	17,000
2003	186,753 +/- 23%	14,800
2002	218,719 +/- 24%	14,300
2001	218,384 +/- 27%	11,800
2000	227,164 +/- 32%	10,800
1999	261,554 +/- 34%	11,400

\*3-year running average

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# SEPTEMBER CANADA GOOSE

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

OUTSIDE DATES: September 1 – September 25, 2025

BAG LIMIT: 15 daily, 45 in possession

SHOOTING HOURS: ½ hour before sunrise to sunset (except as provided for in special hunting options \*)

\* SPECIAL HUNTING OPTIONS: Allows the use of electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours (1/2 hr after sunset) when **no other** waterfowl seasons are open.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

SEASON DATES: September 1 – September 25 (25 days)

BAG LIMIT: 10 daily, 30 in possession

HUNT AREA: Statewide

SHOOTING HOURS:

East of I-95

September 1 – 18: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

September 19 – 25: ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

West of I-95

September 1 – 21: ½ hr before sunrise to ½ hr after sunset.

September 22 - 25: ½ hr before sunrise to sunset.

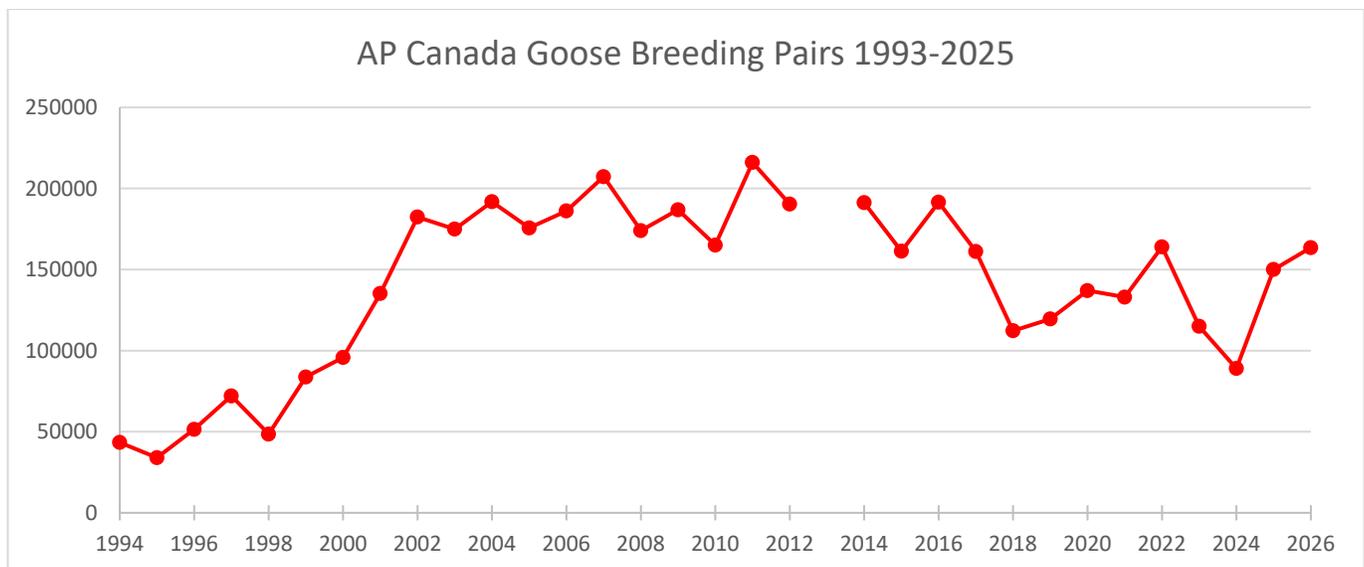
NOTE: Shotguns capable of holding more than 3 shells may be used when no other waterfowl seasons are open (September 1-18 East of I-95 and September 1-21 West of I-95).

Staff is **not** recommending the options of using electronic calls.

## FACT SHEET- History and Status of Migrant Canada Geese - 2026

- Migrant Canada geese from the Atlantic Population (AP) declined significantly from 1985-1995. The hunting season was closed in 1995 to allow the population to recover. Goose numbers rebounded quickly and a limited season (6 days with a 1-bird bag) was held in both 1999 and 2000. As the population increased, the season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days from 2012-2018.
- As the population increased, hunting regulations were liberalized. The season was extended to 30 days in 2001, then 45 days in 2002, and 50 days in 2012. The AP bag limit was increased to 2 per day in 2004. In 2019 the AP bag limit was again reduced to 1 per day with a 30-day season. This was the result of several years of poor conditions on the arctic breeding grounds.
- After several years of below average productivity, two concurrent above average breeding seasons led to an increase in AP Canada goose production. This led to liberal harvest regulations for the 2022-2023 hunting season. Unfortunately, this was followed by a poor production year in 2023 and 2024 where the observed pair estimates (115,300 in 2023) and (89,000 in 2024) were down significantly from 2022 (164,000). The 2026 predicted number of breeding pairs based on the integrated population model was 163,500 which is above the 160k pair threshold for which liberal harvest regulations are recommended in the AP Canada goose Harvest Strategy. The 2026-2027 harvest recommendation is the liberal package which is a 45-day season and a 2 bird bag limit in the AP zone.

**Figure 1.** Atlantic Population Canada Goose Breeding Pair survey estimates 1993-2025.

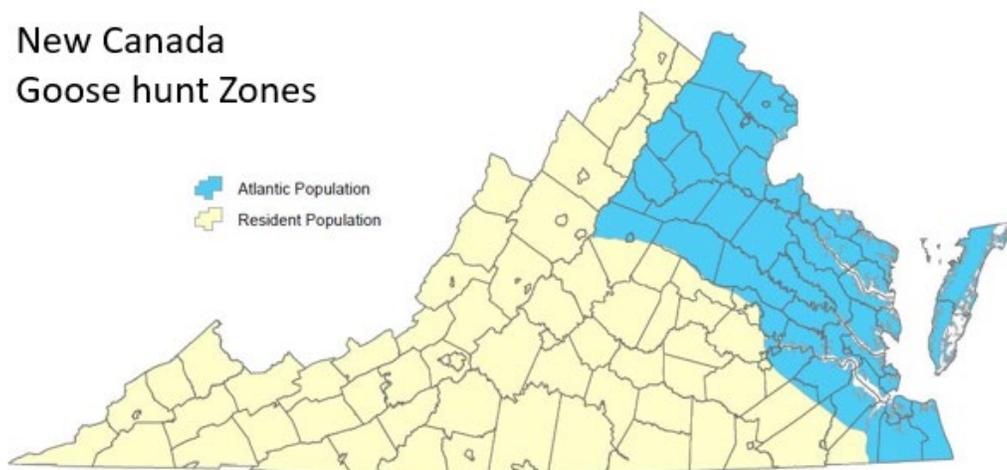


# Canada Goose Populations and Hunt Zones

- In 2020 there was a change in the way the Atlantic Flyway, the Mississippi Flyway and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are defining and managing the different “Migrant” Canada goose populations in the Eastern United States. The Southern James Bay Population (SJBP) is no longer recognized as a separate population, and the eastern portion of this population is now considered part of the Atlantic Population (AP). The Atlantic Population along with the North Atlantic Population (NAP) are now the only recognized subpopulations of “migrant” Canada geese in the Atlantic Flyway. Nearly all the migrant geese that winter in Virginia are from the Atlantic Population, with only ~1% from the NAP.
- Due to this change, during the 2023-2024 season Virginia had to eliminate the SJBP Hunting Zone in Virginia. Some of this former zone (predominantly the northern portion) has been placed in the AP Zone, while the remainder of the area, where fewer migrant geese are located, has been included in the Resident Population Zone (RP).
- The hunting regulations for those areas that are now part of a different zone have changed significantly, so hunters need to make sure they are aware of the new zone boundaries. The description and map of these new Canada geese hunt zones is shown below.

**Atlantic Population (AP) Hunt Zone** – The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

**Resident Population (RP) Hunt Zone** – The portion of the state west of the above AP Zone boundary.



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# CANADA GOOSE

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORKS

### ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE (AP):

Outside Dates: November 15, 2026 – February 5, 2027  
Season Length: 45 hunting days  
Bag Limit: 2 birds daily (6 in possession)

### RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE (RP):

Outside Dates: November 15, 2026 – March 10, 2027  
Season Length: 80 hunting days  
Bag Limit: 5 birds daily (15 in possession)

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

### ATLANTIC POPULATION ZONE: (AP)

Season Dates: November 24 – November 29 (6 days)  
December 24 – January 31 (39 days)  
Bag Limit: 2 geese per day (6 in possession)  
Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

### RESIDENT POPULATION ZONE: (RP)

Season Dates: November 18 – November 29  
December 19 - February 21  
Bag Limit: 5 geese daily (15 in possession)  
Shooting Hours: 1/2-hour before sunrise until sunset daily

NOTE – All seasons also include White-fronted geese along with Canada geese.

## FACT SHEET - Status of Light Geese (Greater and Lesser Snow Geese, and Ross's Geese) - 2026

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- The majority (95%) of the “Light” geese found in the Atlantic Flyway are Greater Snow Geese, while less than 5% are Lesser Snow Geese, with even smaller numbers of Ross’s Geese.
- The principal nesting areas for greater snow geese are on Bylot, Axel Heiberg, Ellesmere, and Baffin Islands, and on Greenland. They winter along the Atlantic Coast from New Jersey to North Carolina.
- The Greater Snow Goose population is monitored on spring staging areas along the St. Lawrence Valley in Quebec. The 2025 population estimate was 428,000 geese. This estimate was lower than the population objective of 500,000 for the first time since the early 1990’s.
- Banding crews at the major snow goose breeding colony on Bylot Island reported above average nest densities and low levels of nest predation.
- Over the last 30 years, snow goose populations increased nearly ten-fold. A shift from feeding almost exclusively in marshes to feeding more on agricultural grains has allowed them to expand their range and habitat use. This shift has also allowed them to return to their breeding habitats in better physical condition, which has led to increased productivity.
- This population has generally stabilized over the past 5 year, however concerns about habitat degradation on their breeding, migration and wintering areas still remain. Snow geese can cause damage to these habitats by pulling up plant roots and denuding marshes of vegetation. Snow geese can also cause conflicts with agricultural interest by pulling up green grains including wheat and barley.
- Current hunting regulations for snow geese are as liberal as Federal Frameworks will allow and include a 107-day season that runs from October to January, and a bag limit that was increased from 15 to 25 in 2010. Liberal seasons have helped increase the harvest, and the population has recently dropped below the population objective of 500,000.
- In addition to the regular hunting season, a Conservation Order (CO) was established in 2009 that authorizes additional snow goose hunting after the end of the regular season frameworks. The CO allows the use of alternative management strategies (unplugged shotguns, electronic calls, shooting to ½ hour after sunset, no daily bag limit) to further increase the harvest of snow geese. The snow goose harvest in Virginia has averaged around 300 birds during the regular season and 600 birds during the Conservation Order over the past 5 years. A decision on the future of the CO will be made in the fall of 2026.

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# LIGHT GOOSE SEASONS

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## REGULAR LIGHT GOOSE SEASON

### FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	107 hunting days
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	October 1, 2026 - March 10, 2027
<b><u>Split Season Option:</u></b>	3-way split season
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)

### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	November 24 – March 10, 2027	(106 days)
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	25 birds daily (no possession limit)	

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# LIGHT GOOSE CONSERVATION ORDER

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

**Outside Dates:**

When no other waterfowl seasons are open

**Bag Limit:**

No daily or possession limit

**Special Hunting Methods:**

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset **only in areas and at times when other waterfowl seasons are closed.**

**Special Requirements:**

States participating in the Conservation Order are required to monitor hunter participation, effort, and success.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**Conservation Order Zone:** The same as the new AP Canada Goose Zone - The area to the east of the following line: the “Blue Ridge” (Loudoun County-Clarke County border) at the West Virginia-Virginia Border, south to Interstate 64 (the Blue Ridge line follows county borders along the western edge of Loudoun-Fauquier-Rappahannock-Madison-Greene-Albemarle and into Nelson Counties), then east along Interstate Rt. 64 to Interstate 95 in Richmond, then south along I-95 to Route 460 in Petersburg, then southeast along Route 460 to Route 32 in the City of Suffolk, then south to the North Carolina border.

**Season Dates:**

**TBD**

**Bag Limit:**

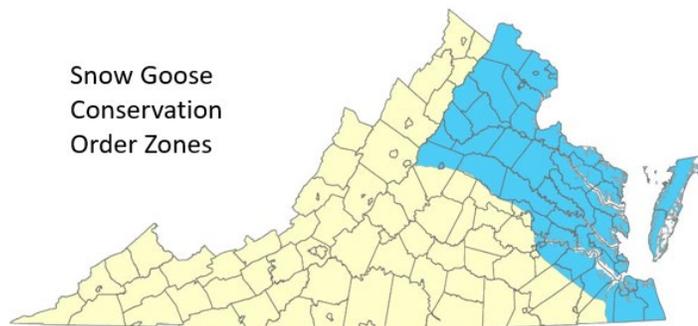
No daily or possession limit

**Special Hunting Methods:**

Electronic calls, unplugged shotguns and extended shooting hours to one-half hour after sunset.

**Special Requirements:**

Hunters participating in the Conservation Order **must register with DWR**, keep a record of their harvest and participation, and return a harvest report form within two weeks following the close of the season.



## FACT SHEET - Status of Atlantic Brant and Tundra Swan - 2026

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- **BRANT**. The main breeding areas for Atlantic Brant are in the Eastern Canadian Arctic on Baffin, Southampton, and Ellesmere Islands. Most brant winter along the Atlantic Coast from MA to NC.
- The 2025 mid-winter survey count for brant was 132,306, which was higher than the previous year's count (121,000) and higher than the previous 3-year average (122,736). The Atlantic brant productivity estimate was 8.6%. Which was lower than the previous year's estimate (16.7%) and the long-term average.
- The annual brant hunting regulation is now based on the Atlantic Brant Integrated Population Model (IPM) that was adopted by the Atlantic Flyway in 2021 and provides an index to the brant population. The model prediction for 2026 is 115,000. As per the Brant Harvest Strategy, this estimate calls for a 2026-2027 harvest regulation of 30 days with a 1-bird daily limit.
- **TUNDRA SWANS**. The Eastern Population of tundra swans nest in arctic tundra areas from Alaska, east to Hudson Bay and Baffin Island. These birds winter in coastal areas from Maryland to North Carolina.
- Estimated productivity of eastern population tundra swans in 2024 was 11% immature birds. This estimate is higher than the 2023 estimate (10%) and similar to the long-term average (11%).
- There were 66,528 eastern population tundra swans counted in the Atlantic Flyway on the 2025 Mid-Winter Survey. This count was 36% higher than last year, but still below the past 10-year average (2016-2025: 87,226)
- Nine states in the U.S. hunt tundra swans including Alaska, Utah, Montana and Nevada in the Pacific Flyway, North Dakota and South Dakota in the Central Flyway, and Delaware, Virginia and North Carolina in the Atlantic Flyway.
- There are no changes in the total number of hunting permits allowed for EP tundra swans this year (9,600 across the U.S., with 5,600 of those in the Atlantic Flyway) as the population estimate is still within the 70,000 to 110,000 range. In the Atlantic Flyway, the allocation of hunt permits is split between the 3 states in approximate proportion to the number of swans in each state. The 5,600 permits available in the Atlantic Flyway for the 2026-2027 season will be distributed as follows: NC– 4,853, VA-475, and DE-272.
- The tundra swan hunting season in Virginia is authorized and conducted as specified in the Atlantic Flyway Tundra Swan Management Plan and Hunt Plan, with limits and guidelines as specified under an MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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# ATLANTIC BRANT

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	30 hunting days
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	September 23, 2026 - January 31, 2027
<b><u>Split Season Option:</u></b>	2-way split season
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b><u>Season Dates:</u></b>	December 19 – December 31 (13 days)
	January 15 – January 31 (17 days)
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	1 bird daily (3 in possession)

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# TUNDRA SWAN

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## **FEDERAL FRAMEWORK**

**Season Length:** 90 hunting days

**Outside Dates:** October 1, 2026 - January 31, 2027

Virginia may issue up to 475 permits and must obtain harvest and hunter participation data. Each permittee is authorized to take one (1) tundra swan per season.

**Bag Limit:** One per permittee per season

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Season Dates:** November 15 - January 31

**Bag Limit:** One per permittee per season

**Hunt Area:** All counties and portions of counties east of U.S. Route I- 95 and south of the Prince William/Stafford county line in Chopawamsic Creek at Quantico Marine Corps Base.

**NOTE:** VDWR will issue no more than 475 swan-hunting permits to holders of a valid Virginia hunting license. Only hunters with a valid 2026-2027 tundra swan-hunting permit issued by VDWR shall be authorized to hunt tundra swans. Each permittee will be authorized to take one tundra swan during the season. Swan hunting permits are non-transferable and are valid for use only by the person to whom issued. Permits must be in the immediate possession of the permittee while swan hunting. Immediately at the time and place of kill, successful hunters must permanently record the month and day of kill on their permit and attach it to their swan. The VDWR is required to obtain hunter participation and harvest information to offer this Tundra Swan hunting season. **Hunters are required to complete the tundra swan hunt questionnaire (survey) and submit their results to the Department by February 15, 2027.** Those who fail to submit their results are ineligible for future drawings.

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# FALCONRY

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## FEDERAL FRAMEWORK

<b><u>Season Length:</u></b>	No more than 107 on any species (Gun and Falconry combined)
<b><u>Outside Dates:</u></b>	September 1 - March 10
<b><u>Bag Limit:</u></b>	3 daily (9 in possession)
<b><u>Hawking Hours:</u></b>	½ hour before sunrise until sunset.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

<b><u>Dove:</u></b>	September 5 – October 23 November 21 – November 29 December 19 – January 31
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<b><u>Rail, Gallinule, Moorhen:</u></b>	September 5 – December 20
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<b><u>Woodcock:</u></b>	October 17 – January 31
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<b><u>Snipe:</u></b>	October 1 – December 2 December 19 – January 31
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<b><u>Canada Goose:</u></b>	September 1 - September 25 November 18 – November 29 December 19 - February 21
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<b><u>September Teal:</u></b>	September 16 - September 30
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<b><u>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</u></b>	October 9 - 12 November 18 – February 7
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<b><u>Brant and Snow Goose:</u></b>	October 17 – January 31
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**NOTE:** Recommended dates based on adoption of preceding gun season proposals; if amended, staff requests permission to calculate permissible dates for each species within the allowable federal framework.



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES**  
**2026 – 2030 CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

## Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement is extended to Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources staff involved in the creation and review of previous iterations of Virginia's chronic wasting disease management plans, including significant contributions from both current and former members of the Wildlife Health and Deer programs.

Primary contributors to the 2026-2030 plan include the following Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources staff:

**Alexandra Lombard, MS – Wildlife Health Coordinator**

**John Tracey, DVM – State Wildlife Veterinarian**

**Justin Folks, MS – Deer Project Leader**

**Jackie Rosenberger, MS – Elk Project Leader**

**Katie Martin, MS – Deer-Bear-Turkey Biologist**

**Mallory Gyovai White, MS – Human Dimensions Program Manager**

Staff members involved with DWR's CWD Committee were instrumental in providing feedback over the course of this plan's development, to include members of the Wildlife, Outreach, and Law Enforcement Divisions within the agency.

Recognition is also given to the many staff and volunteers whose day-to-day work supports surveillance, management, and outreach activities that make implementation of this plan possible.

The 2026-2030 Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan reflects the collective expertise and collaboration of the individuals and groups acknowledged above.

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## Executive Summary

The 2026-2030 Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan was developed using the framework of the previous iteration of this plan (2021-2025) and is intended to bridge the gap between what DWR has been doing and the anticipated direction of CWD management based on current knowledge. This plan highlights the use of preventive, statewide, management strategies that will address the health of deer and elk populations in Virginia regardless of their known CWD status. Maintaining surveillance that provides a landscape level understanding of CWD remains a priority, as having a clear understanding of the disease is necessary to determine appropriate management strategies.

Adaptability and flexibility are key pieces of this plan, providing DWR management options and the opportunity to implement new strategies. This plan is guided by and organized using goals – broader, desired results – and the potential strategies that may be used to achieve such goals. The strategies laid out within the plan highlight best management practices that have been identified to combat the spread of CWD.

Informed by the 2026-2030 CWD Management Plan, the overall goals for CWD management in Virginia include:

1. Prevent the spread of CWD into new areas of Virginia and reduce transmission in areas where CWD is known to occur.
2. Detect CWD in new areas of Virginia at low apparent prevalence levels.
3. Increase support and awareness of partners and the public regarding CWD management efforts.
4. Contribute to the minimization of human exposure to CWD prions.

To achieve these goals, the management plan is broken down into the following sections, each containing more focused goals and strategies.

### CWD Surveillance in Free-Ranging Deer

DWR aims to detect CWD at low apparent prevalence in areas where CWD is not known to occur, and to monitor the spread and prevalence of the disease once it has become established. Risk-based, weighted surveillance strategies are employed at the county level, utilizing a variety of surveillance and sampling methods.

### Initial Response to Trigger and Border Detections

When CWD is detected in a new area, DWR will work rapidly to confirm the detection, share information with partners and the public, determine the spatial distribution of the disease, and implement management actions to minimize the spread.

### CWD Management in Free-Ranging Deer

DWR has established five management schemes, which include potential statewide measures to consider, as well as four disease management tiers based on current apparent prevalence of the disease. Statewide strategies are designed to be beneficial regardless of the CWD status in a given area. Categorizing management actions into tiers allows for management flexibility and adaptability. High disease prevalence and correlated environmental contamination render some management

actions ineffective, while aggressive management actions may prove effective if the disease is found early.

#### Elk Population Considerations

DWR began pursuing elk restoration in 2010 and now has an established Elk Management Zone in Southwest Virginia. Because elk are susceptible to CWD, this section was newly created for this plan to address strategies designed to prevent CWD from reaching the elk management zone, detect disease early, and minimize negative impacts to the elk population.

#### CWD Prevention, Surveillance, and Management in Captive Cervid Facilities and Hunting Enclosures

As the regulatory agency for captive cervids in Virginia, this section lays out the prevention and management strategies for CWD in captive cervid facilities, including surveillance requirements as well as procedures should CWD be detected within a facility.

#### CWD Outreach and Engagement

CWD management is most effective with strong public support and participation. Outreach and education are necessary to keep the public and partners informed, facilitating engagement in CWD management efforts. Human dimensions research will be used to help inform decisions.

#### CWD Spillover: Current Knowledge of Risk and Prevention

To date, there have been no documented cases of natural transmission of CWD from deer to non-cervid species or humans; however, research suggests that the risk of possible spillover into other species is not zero. Should such an event occur, it will be imperative that DWR is prepared to collaboratively respond to protect the health of wildlife, humans, and livestock.

#### Financial Considerations

While agency budgets decrease and hunter participation declines, CWD management costs increase as the disease continues to spread. DWR should prioritize surveillance and management efforts that fulfill multiple priorities.

## Introduction

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a slowly progressive, neurodegenerative, and ultimately fatal disease that affects members of the family Cervidae. CWD is classified as a naturally occurring [transmissible spongiform encephalopathy \(TSE\)](#), along with scrapie, [bovine spongiform encephalopathy \(BSE\)](#), and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.<sup>1</sup> The causative agent of CWD is an infectious protein, called a prion, which slowly accumulates in the central nervous system and causes “sponge-like” changes to the associated tissues, leading to neurological impairment.<sup>2,3,4</sup> While prions tend to congregate in the oropharyngeal nervous and lymphatic tissues,<sup>5</sup> they have also been detected in the saliva, feces, urine, blood, muscle, and antler velvet of infected individuals.<sup>6,4,7,8</sup> There is no known effective treatment or vaccine currently available for CWD, though vaccine research is ongoing.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

Chronic wasting disease infection leads to a protracted course of disease.<sup>3</sup> The average [incubation period](#) of cervids varies from 1.5 to nearly 3 years<sup>12</sup> and, despite the absence of any signs of illness, infected animals begin shedding infectious prions in various bodily fluids and excrement shortly after infection.<sup>13,8,14</sup> Clinical signs of CWD include emaciation, excessive salivation, loss of fear of humans, tremors or staggering, drooping head or ears, and apparent lack of awareness.<sup>1</sup> Clinical signs are typically only exhibited in the weeks or months just prior to death.<sup>3</sup>

Chronic wasting disease is believed to be one of the most infectious TSEs and spreads highly efficiently among cervids.<sup>15,16,17</sup> Research indicates that [horizontal transmission](#) of CWD occurs via direct contact with infected animals, carcasses, urine, feces, saliva, and other bodily fluids<sup>18,19,13,20</sup> and indirectly as a result of prion contamination of the environment.<sup>15,21</sup> CWD prions are extremely environmentally resilient and remain infectious in the soil for at least two years post-deposition.<sup>18,22</sup> Plants have been shown to uptake prions from the soil, thereby making them available for consumption by herbivorous animals.<sup>23</sup> Evidence of [vertical transmission](#) (in utero) has recently been documented in white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), with CWD prions found in the reproductive environment of CWD-positive does and presence of CWD prions in fetuses being carried by those dams.<sup>24</sup>

Prion diseases often exhibit a narrow host range and are rarely diagnosed in humans.<sup>25,26,27</sup> Although human exposure to CWD has certainly occurred as a result of the harvesting and consumption of deer and elk by millions of hunters in the United States since the 1980s, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) have not established a known link between CWD and any human neurological disease.<sup>27</sup> In addition, circumstantial evidence and research suggests that the risk of transmission to humans is low.<sup>28,29</sup> However, experimental CWD research involving squirrel monkeys and macaques,<sup>30,31,32</sup> in combination with the possible decades-long incubation of CWD in people, suggest that human exposure to CWD should be avoided. The CDC therefore advises hunters to both avoid consumption of venison harvested from known CWD-positive animals and to test any cervid harvested in an area known to be affected by the prion disease prior to consumption.<sup>33</sup>

The complex nature of CWD, most notably the protracted incubation period, the prolonged shedding of prions by infected individuals prior to the appearance of clinical signs, and the extended persistence of prions on the landscape, render management of the disease in a free-ranging population extremely difficult.<sup>34</sup> To date, most CWD management strategies have relied heavily on

reducing population densities and removing localized disease foci via hunter harvest and/or agency culling.<sup>12,35,36,37</sup> Strategies to reduce infection rates that rely predominantly on lowering cervid densities via female-focused or herd-control harvest assume that CWD transmission is density-dependent (infection rate is determined by host density), whereas many models suggest that CWD is frequency-dependent (infection rate is independent of host density and is associated with contact in particular social groups) or a combination of the two.<sup>38,39,40,41,42</sup> There is little published information describing effective management approaches<sup>43,44</sup> but various models suggest that harvest focused on antlered deer most consistently reduces disease prevalence.<sup>42,45</sup> Recent research in Wyoming reported population-level declines in both mule deer and white-tailed deer that are directly attributable to CWD.<sup>46,47</sup> Arkansas has reported reduced adult survival and reduced reproductive rate of CWD-positive white-tailed deer, contributing to population-level declines. Further, CWD-positive animals in Arkansas exhibited larger home range sizes than CWD-negative deer.<sup>48</sup> Much closer to Virginia, a recent mortality study of white-tailed deer in West Virginia has identified CWD as the leading cause of mortality in Hampshire County, where CWD was first detected in the state.<sup>49</sup> These studies demonstrate the need to continue to develop, execute, and evaluate new management strategies.

## Goals

The dynamic nature of many wildlife diseases often leads to planning and logistical challenges. While the continuously expanding geographic scope and [apparent prevalence](#) of disease may alter the allocation of resources, the effectiveness of novel harvest strategies (antlered and/or antlerless), landscape or land use changes, available funding, recent harvest rates, etc. may also alter annual surveillance and monitoring strategies. This plan is designed to encourage annual review of CWD monitoring/surveillance data, deer harvest data, and current deer population objectives, in combination with current harvest strategies and regulatory actions, to maximize flexibility and adaptation in the face of continually changing available resources and a dynamic disease landscape.

**The goals of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), as they pertain to CWD management, include the following:**

1. Sustain deer and elk populations.
2. Preserve Virginia's deer hunting heritage.
3. Address human health concerns.

The DWR CWD Management Plan aims to achieve these Agency goals via the development of a complementary set of focused goals, followed by a list of strategies suggested by the plan to achieve the goals.

**The goals of the DWR CWD Management Plan include the following:**

1. Prevent the spread of CWD into new areas of Virginia and reduce transmission in areas where CWD is known to occur.
2. Detect CWD in new areas of Virginia at low apparent prevalence levels.
3. Increase support and awareness of partners and the public regarding CWD management efforts.
4. Contribute to the minimization of human exposure to CWD prions.

**Strategies included in the DWR CWD Management Plan to meet these goals include the following:**

1. Monitor apparent prevalence and spatial distribution of CWD in areas where the disease is known to occur.
2. Conduct statistically relevant surveillance in areas where CWD is not yet known to occur.
3. Continually evaluate the efficacy of disease management strategies used in Virginia and elsewhere.
4. Increase public support for DWR efforts to control the spread of CWD.
5. Increase compliance with Virginia laws and regulations intended to control the spread of CWD.
6. Engage and communicate effectively with DWR staff, stakeholders, and other partners in a timely, meaningful, and efficient manner.
7. Facilitate CWD testing for the public.

## History of CWD in Virginia

Following the discovery of CWD in Wisconsin in 2002, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources developed a surveillance and response plan for the disease and initiated CWD surveillance in Virginia. Beginning in 2005, when CWD was first detected in Hampshire County, West Virginia, DWR began to focus CWD surveillance in adjacent counties. In 2009, active surveillance was conducted in an area of western Frederick and Shenandoah Counties that were closest to the positive cases in West Virginia.

Virginia’s first case of CWD was confirmed in a free-ranging 2.5-year-old female white-tailed deer harvested by a hunter on November 14, 2009, in western Frederick County. A Containment Area (CA) was established in the western and northern portions of Frederick and Shenandoah counties, respectively. The first CWD detection in Shenandoah occurred in 2014. Due to continued geographic spread of the disease, the CA was expanded in 2015 to include Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties. In 2018, DWR initiated a statewide targeted CWD surveillance strategy to optimize sampling effort by focusing on older males. The majority of samples collected using this strategy were submitted through cooperating taxidermists. Through this effort, CWD was confirmed in a hunter-harvested adult male white-tailed deer originating from Culpeper County. In 2019, the term “Containment Area” was exchanged for a more accurately descriptive term, “[Disease Management Area](#),” 1 (DMA1) and Culpeper, Madison, and Orange counties were designated DMA2. Further spread of the disease into Fauquier County in 2019 necessitated an expansion of DMA2 to include Fauquier, Page, Loudoun, and Rappahannock counties. A single CWD detection was confirmed in Montgomery County in 2020 and resulted in the creation of DMA3 (originally Floyd, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties). In 2023, CWD was detected in a hunter-harvested deer in Tazewell County, prompting the creation of DMA4 (Tazewell, Smyth, Bland). As of 2025, Virginia has four CWD DMAs encompassing 26 counties. A map of Virginia’s CWD cases and DMAs through 2025 can be seen in Figure 1, and a depiction of how they fit into the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. can be seen in Figure 2. A timeline of deer regulations, CWD-related findings and changes in Virginia is highlighted below in Table 1. Summaries of surveillance efforts are outlined in Table 2.

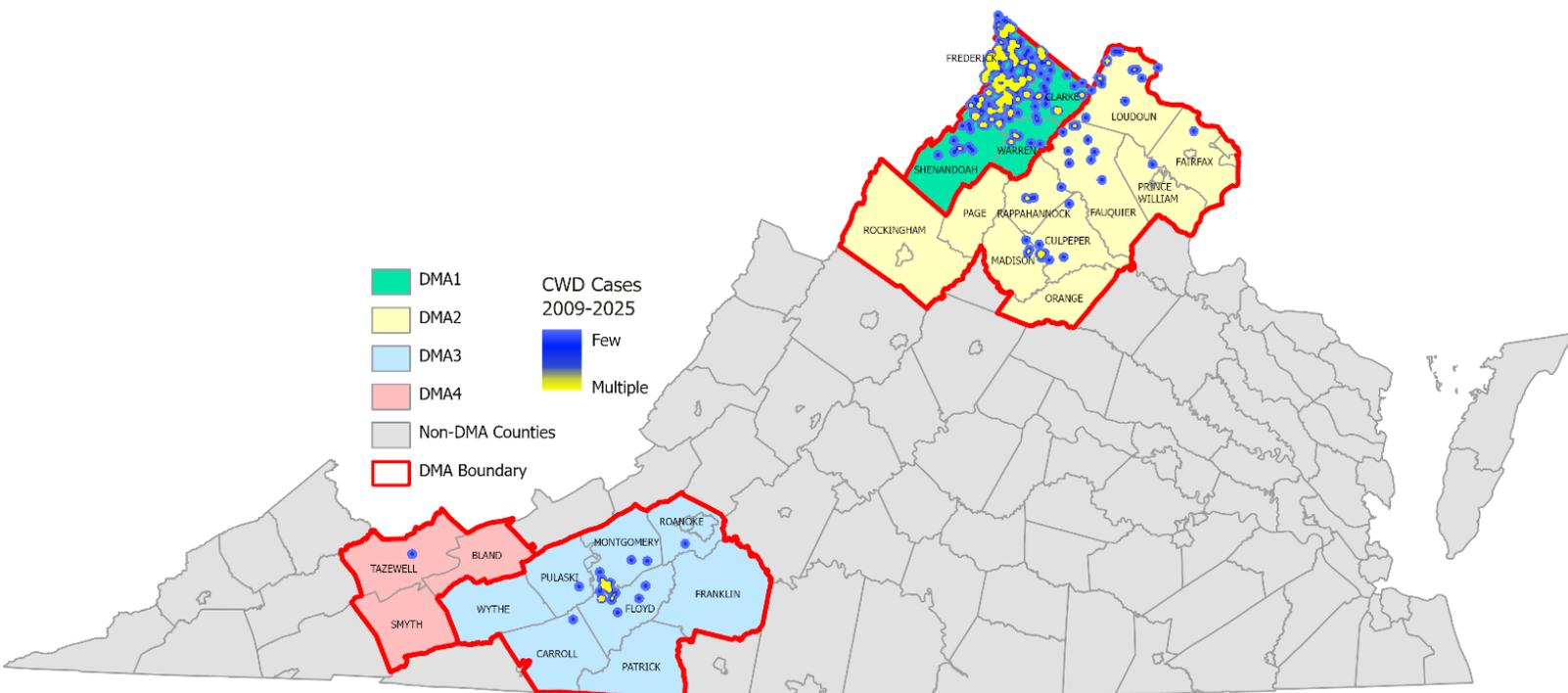


Figure 1. Chronic wasting disease cases and Disease Management Areas across Virginia, 2009-2025.

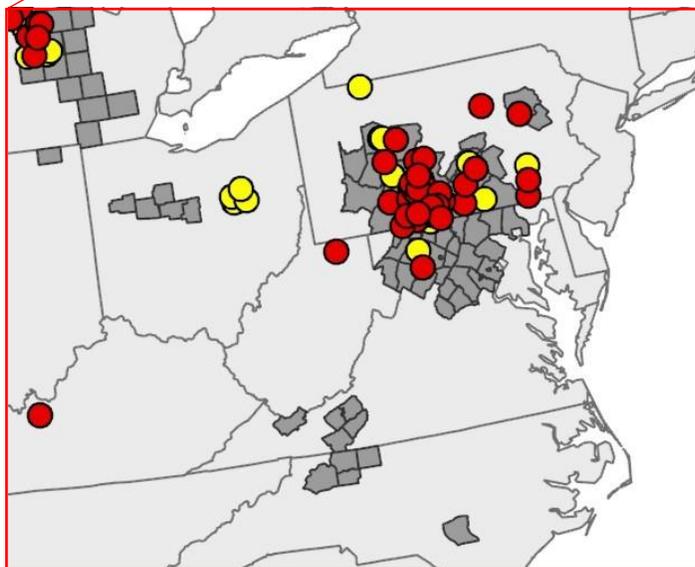
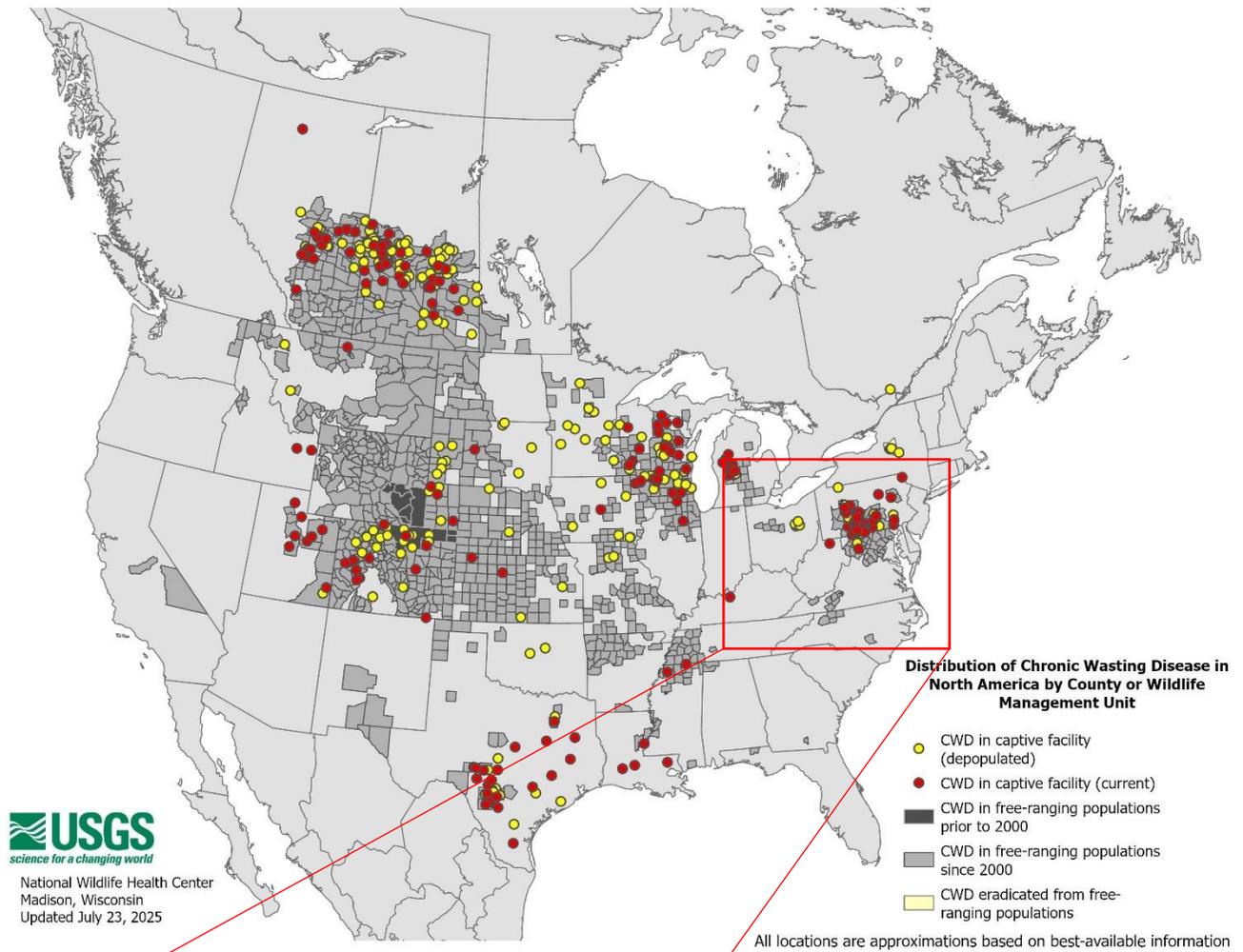


Figure 2: Chronic wasting disease across North America, with a callout of the Mid-Atlantic region, 2025.

**Table 1.** Timeline of deer feeding, captive cervid, carcass transport, CWD testing, and CWD management regulations in Virginia

1936	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hunting over bait prohibited</li> </ul>
1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No new captive deer permits</li> </ul>
1967	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CWD discovered in captive herd in CO</li> </ul>
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deer feeding on public lands prohibited</li> </ul>
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deer enclosures prohibited</li> </ul>
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Live deer importation prohibited; CWD surveillance initiated</li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CWD detected in Hampshire/Hardy County, WV; partial deer carcass importation and movement restrictions</li> </ul>
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deer feeding is prohibited statewide during hunting season</li> <li>Prohibition of enclosures that prevent free egress of deer</li> </ul>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory testing of hunter-harvested deer initiated</li> </ul>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First CWD detection in Virginia – Frederick County</li> </ul>
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CWD Containment Area (CA) created; mandatory deer testing in CA, deer feeding and rehabilitation banned year-round in CA, carcass export restrictions for CA</li> </ul>
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prohibition on importation of whole cervid carcasses from any enclosure in North America</li> </ul>
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First CWD detection in Shenandoah County</li> </ul>
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide ban on natural urine-based cervid lures</li> <li>CA expanded to include all of Clarke, Frederick, Shenandoah, and Warren counties</li> </ul>
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Localities given jurisdiction to prohibit deer feeding</li> </ul>
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First CWD detection in Culpeper County</li> </ul>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The term “Containment Area” updated to “Disease Management Area (DMA)” and DMA2 created and included Culpeper, Madison, and Orange counties</li> <li>First CWD detections in Fauquier and Clarke counties</li> <li>Total carcass ban, deer feeding ban, and APRs removed in counties within 25 miles of a positive</li> </ul>
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First CWD detections in Loudoun, Madison, Montgomery, Rappahannock, and Warren counties.</li> <li>Fauquier, Loudoun, Page, and Rappahannock counties added to DMA2.</li> </ul>
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMA3 created to include Floyd, Montgomery, and Pulaski counties</li> <li>First CWD detection in Floyd County.</li> </ul>
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carroll County added to DMA3</li> <li>First CWD detections in Fairfax and Pulaski counties.</li> </ul>

<b>2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patrick County added to DMA3 due to proximity to detections in North Carolina</li> <li>Arlington, Fairfax, and Prince William counties added to DMA2</li> <li><b>First CWD detections in Carroll and Tazewell counties</b></li> </ul>
<b>2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Franklin, Roanoke, and Wythe counties added to DMA3 due to detections within 10 miles of their borders</li> <li>DMA4 created to include Bland, Smyth, and Tazewell counties</li> </ul>
<b>2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>First CWD detections in Page, Prince William, and Roanoke counties</b></li> <li>Rockingham County added to DMA2 due to proximity to positive detections in West Virginia</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** CWD testing summary in Virginia, 2002 – 2025. Season year is July 1<sup>st</sup> of the written year through June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year.

Season Year	Number Tested	CWD Detections
<b>2002</b>	1,129	0
<b>2003</b>	85	0
<b>2004</b>	100	0
<b>2005</b>	701	0
<b>2006</b>	839	0
<b>2007</b>	1,234	0
<b>2008</b>	365	0
<b>2009</b>	340	1
<b>2010</b>	593	1
<b>2011</b>	1,664*	2
<b>2012</b>	351	1
<b>2013</b>	422	2
<b>2014</b>	698	3
<b>2015</b>	1,597	3
<b>2016</b>	1,545	9
<b>2017</b>	1,805	16
<b>2018</b>	3,284**	30
<b>2019</b>	5,653**	20
<b>2020</b>	5,729**	22
<b>2021</b>	6,524**	24
<b>2022</b>	5,909**	47
<b>2023</b>	8,021**	72
<b>2024</b>	8,200**	109
<b>Total</b>	<b>56,788</b>	<b>362</b>

\* Statewide surveillance conducted

\*\* Targeted statewide surveillance conducted

## Using an Adaptive Management Framework for CWD

DWR is incorporating an adaptive management framework into its approach to wildlife disease outbreaks, which facilitates learning from management decisions and allows flexibility to change disease management strategies based upon effectiveness, continually evolving research, and public acceptance. An adaptive management approach that allows for the application, evaluation, and improvement of CWD suppression strategies after collection and analysis of data is recommended by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies<sup>50</sup> and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.<sup>51</sup> Using an adaptive management framework, deer management strategies may be influenced by new and ongoing research aimed at demonstrating how CWD spreads on the landscape. The effectiveness of CWD management actions and suppression strategies will be continually evaluated.

## CWD Surveillance in Free-Ranging Deer

DWR has been conducting targeted CWD surveillance since 2002 and established a statewide surveillance program several years later by partnering with taxidermists across the Commonwealth. These efforts have led to discoveries of the disease in new parts of Virginia and have shaped management decisions. DWR has established several primary goals for CWD surveillance for free-ranging white-tailed and sika deer, with the intention of using data collected to evaluate and guide management strategies.

### Goals:

1. Detect disease at low apparent prevalence.
2. Determine and monitor geographic spread and prevalence of CWD.
3. Facilitate testing services for hunter-harvested deer.
4. Maintain transparency with the public on results and testing.

### Strategies to meet these goals include the following:

#### 1. Detect disease at low apparent prevalence

- a. Conduct a county-based [risk assessment](#).
  - i. Determine the risk level for each non-positive county
- b. Optimize CWD surveillance efforts by utilizing a risk-based [weighted surveillance strategy](#) based on the results of the county-based risk assessment
  - i. Conduct annual surveillance in highest risk counties to a level that would detect disease at 1% prevalence with 95% confidence.
  - ii. Maintain taxidermist CWD surveillance to target testing of adult bucks.
- c. Consider implementing environmental sampling in localized areas.

#### 2. Determine and monitor geographic spread and prevalence of CWD

- a. Conduct annual [baseline surveillance](#).
  - i. Surveillance methods may include, but are not limited to:
    1. Voluntary testing (fridge stations, processors, taxidermists)
    2. Mandatory testing
    3. Targeted testing ([clinical suspects](#), roadkill, [cluster sampling](#))
- b. Consider establishment of a [Disease Focus Zone \(DFZ\)](#) around outlier detections.
  - i. Increase surveillance methods through any of the following:
    1. Voluntary testing
    2. Mandatory testing
    3. Cluster sampling
- c. Conduct year-round passive surveillance by investigating clinical suspect reports from the public.

#### 3. Facilitate testing services for hunter-harvested deer

- a. Maintain accessible testing options for hunters who would like to test harvested deer for CWD.
- b. Collaborate with Hunters for the Hungry to facilitate testing of donated deer harvested from [CWD-positive counties](#).

- c. Collaborate with localities across Virginia to facilitate testing of harvested deer.
- 4. Maintain transparency with the public on results and testing**
- a. Continue to publish press releases upon discovery of CWD-positive detections in new counties.
- b. Provide testing results to hunters in a timely manner.
- c. At minimum, continue to share surveillance data post-season.
- d. Develop a CWD dashboard to provide up-to-date surveillance data.
- e. Publish an annual report.

## Initial Response to Trigger and Border Detections

When CWD-positive detections are identified in new areas, an initial response is required to confirm the positive result and location of harvest. Information must be able to be disseminated in a timely manner with partners and the public, and appropriate action must be taken to prevent further spread of disease.

Definitions:

1. **Trigger detection:** the first CWD detection in a county.
2. **Border detection:**
  - a. **Out-of-state:** CWD detection located within 10 miles of a Virginia county not included in a DMA.
  - b. **In-state:** CWD detection within a DMA county that is located less than 10 miles from a Virginia county that is not included in a DMA.

Trigger and border detections initiate consideration of a well-planned, thoughtful response that may result in either the creation of a new DMA or re-evaluation of current DMA boundaries.

The type of initial response to a **trigger detection** may vary according to the following parameters:

1. Prior inclusion of the trigger county in a DMA
2. Adjacency of the trigger county to a DMA
3. Time of year of detection

The type of initial response to a **border detection** may vary according to the following parameters:

1. Distance to a non-DMA county (in-state border detection)
2. Time of year of detection
3. Age, sex, relative location, and clinical disease status of the positive animal
  - a. Staff may use discretion when considering changes to DMAs relative to border detections in some circumstances

**Goals of the initial response to a CWD trigger or border detection include the following:**

1. Confirm CWD-positive status as quickly as possible (trigger and in-state border detections).
2. Minimize geographic spread of disease and reduce disease transmission.
3. Determine apparent prevalence and spatial distribution of disease within 12 months post-confirmation.
4. Engage and communicate effectively with Department staff, stakeholders, other partners, the public, and the media in a timely, meaningful, and efficient manner.

**Strategies to meet these initial response goals include the following:**

1. **Confirm CWD-positive status (trigger and in-state border detections)**
  - a. Declare trigger or in-state border detection [laboratory confirmed](#) when:
    - i. A preliminary positive [ELISA](#) test is confirmed with [IHC](#) testing run at [NVSL](#) or a [NAHLN](#) laboratory accredited to perform CWD IHC tests, or

- ii. A preliminary positive IHC test is confirmed with IHC testing run at NVSL.
- b. Wildlife Health team to submit tissues for DNA comparison analysis for hunter-harvested deer if the following conditions are met:
  - i. County is not already included in a DMA OR
  - ii. If county is already included in a DMA, it is classified as a border detection, and
  - iii. Suitable tissue samples that can confidently be paired to the CWD-positive deer are available for comparison with the lymph node tissue
    - Examples: Antlers, skull, or European mount that confidently corresponds to the CWD-positive deer via photographs or other corroboration
- c. Declare a detection “location confirmed” according to the following timeline:
  - i. **Roadkill, clinical suspects, DWR collected in the field:** Immediately post-collection of sample.
  - ii. **Hunter-harvested deer, no samples submitted for DNA comparison analysis:** After Wildlife Health Team or LE confirms the location of harvest with the hunter and obtains GPS coordinates.
  - iii. **Hunter-harvested deer, samples submitted for DNA comparison analysis:** After Wildlife Health Team or LE confirms the location of harvest with the hunter, obtains GPS coordinates, and DNA comparison analysis results are returned.

## 2. Minimize geographic spread of disease and reduce disease transmission

- a. Evaluate county-level CWD monitoring data, private land deer population status, and deer population objectives for each county newly added to a DMA
  - i. If the private land deer population status does not match the deer population objective, increase antlerless harvest the following deer hunting season by initiating new or additional harvest strategies
    - 1. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: [Earn-a-Buck \(EAB\)](#), early September general firearms antlerless season, extension of the general firearms season, etc.
    - 2. Detections that are laboratory confirmed after April will not result in modified hunting seasons until the following calendar year
  - ii. No public engagement or formal declarations will occur until location is confirmed
- b. By May 1:
  - i. Formally announce the boundaries of the new or expanded DMA
  - ii. Restrict carcass transport out of any counties or clearly demarcated portions of counties newly added to a DMA and/or follow carcass disposal regulations.
  - iii. Prohibit rehabilitation of fawns originating from within the DMA and prohibit rehabilitation facilities located within the DMA from rehabilitating fawns
  - iv. Institute or continue a year-round deer feeding ban in any counties located within 25 miles of all positive detections.
  - v. Remove [antler point restrictions \(APRs\)](#) from all counties within 25 miles of all positive detections.

- c. Within three months of the conclusion of the following hunting season, analyze the CWD monitoring data for each county newly added to a DMA and classify each county into a management tier.

### **3. Determine apparent prevalence and spatial distribution of disease**

- a. Investigate all credible reports of clinical suspects received from the public.
- b. Increase surveillance efforts in counties/areas within 10 miles of the detection if:
  - i. **Trigger detections only:** County is not already included in a DMA OR if the county is already included in a DMA, the detection is also classified as a border detection
  - ii. CWD-positive status is confirmed, and information is released to the public with at least four weeks of the hunting season remaining,
  - iii. Due to *timing* of the confirmation, the detection did not result in an expanded or new DMA for the current or upcoming hunting season (i.e., confirmed between May and January),
  - iv. Fewer than 150 deer per county were tested for CWD the previous three years *combined*.
- c. Consider initiation of [post-season surveillance](#) in counties/areas within 10 miles of the detection if:
  - i. **Trigger detections only:** County is not already included in a DMA OR
  - ii. If the county is already included in a DMA, the detection is also classified as a border detection
  - iii. CWD-positive status is confirmed and information is released to the public by the end of January,
  - iv. Due to *timing* of the confirmation, the detection did not result in an expanded or new DMA for the current or upcoming hunting season (i.e., confirmed between May and January),
  - v. Fewer than 150 deer per county were tested for CWD the previous three years *combined*
- d. Initiate additional surveillance plans in the newly created DMA or new additions to an existing DMA for the following hunting season
- e. Consider additional surveillance in counties adjacent to the DMA
- f. Consider the creation of Disease Focus Zone(s) for the following hunting season for isolated detections located more than 5 miles from the nearest CWD detection
- g. Evaluate the apparent prevalence and spatial distribution of disease for each new county or part of a county added to a DMA at the conclusion of the next deer hunting season and determine the appropriate management tier.
- h. Consider cluster sampling in a 3-mile radius around the positive detection.

### **4. Engage and communicate effectively with DWR staff, stakeholders, partners, public, and media**

- a. Throughout the season:
  - i. Communicate results with hunters as quickly as possible upon receipt.
  - ii. Communicate directly with internal staff and relevant partners on new detections.
  - iii. Issue press releases on any CWD-positive detections confirmed in any new counties.
- b. Each April:

- i. Convene a virtual or in-person meeting with [local DWR deer and CWD management staff](#) and the CWD committee
  - 1. Items to discuss:
    - (a) Counties to be added to a DMA
    - (b) Counties located within 25 miles of new positive detections
    - (c) Re-calculate sampling quotas for new DMA counties
    - (d) Appropriate short-term (to be initiated within the next one to six months) response actions
  - 2. Topics to consider:
    - (a) *Potential public health concerns*: Voluntary CWD testing sites
    - (b) *Apparent prevalence and disease distribution assessments*: Processor-assisted CWD sample collection effort and/or voluntary CWD testing sites (in-season), kill-permit holder-assisted CWD sample collection effort (post-season), road-kill sampling, etc.
    - (c) *Disease transmission reduction*: Family group removal via cluster sampling/specialized hunts, initiation of Disease Focus Zones, etc.
- c. By the end of May:
  - i. Issue a press release with statewide surveillance summary and changes to regulations or DMAs.
  - ii. Communicate any updates with permitted wildlife rehabilitators and taxidermists.
  - iii. Initiate outreach campaigns for any major changes
- d. In September and October:
  - i. Hold in-person and virtual presentations about updates and changes.

## CWD Management in Free-Ranging Deer

As CWD continues to spread in Virginia and as limitations on surveillance and monitoring are recognized, the need for widespread preventive measures to minimize introduction and spread of disease has become increasingly important. Management strategies implemented on a statewide scale have the potential to limit the spread of disease regardless of the current known CWD status across all areas of Virginia. As such, DWR has established five management schemes with differing goals and strategies that are based on apparent prevalence, as management strategies will have differing impacts based on the disease prevalence. Figure 3 depicts these management tiers using Frederick County, VA as an example. The trends in apparent prevalence in this county mirror observations in CWD epidemic growth across other U.S. states.<sup>52</sup> Assessment may occur by the local CWD management team to determine if the risk of CWD spread and establishment is high enough to warrant management actions consistent with another management tier than the one designated by apparent prevalence. Factors to consider include, but are not limited to, proximity to an [endemic](#) area or county, detection of clinically affected animals within the county or within 5 miles of the county border, level of historical CWD surveillance, etc. Table 3 provides a summary of the management strategies for each tier which are then expanded upon in the text that follows.

### Statewide

- All areas of Virginia regardless of current known CWD status.

### Tier 1: Early CWD

- Counties with less than 1% apparent prevalence of CWD. Aggressive management actions have the potential to be most effective when CWD remains below this level. When CWD remains below 1% apparent prevalence, transmission occurs slowly.

### Tier 2: Transitioning to endemic CWD

- Counties with apparent prevalence of CWD between 1 and 5%. The rate of CWD transmission and environmental contamination increases.

### Tier 3: Endemic CWD

- Counties with apparent prevalence of CWD between 5 and 25%. When CWD surpasses 5% apparent prevalence, the transmission rate will increase further and there is more widespread environmental contamination.

### Tier 4: Widespread endemic CWD

- Counties with apparent prevalence of CWD greater than 25%. Recent research has documented population declines in deer in areas with high prevalence. At this point, the rate of transmission is high among deer and environmental contamination is extensive.

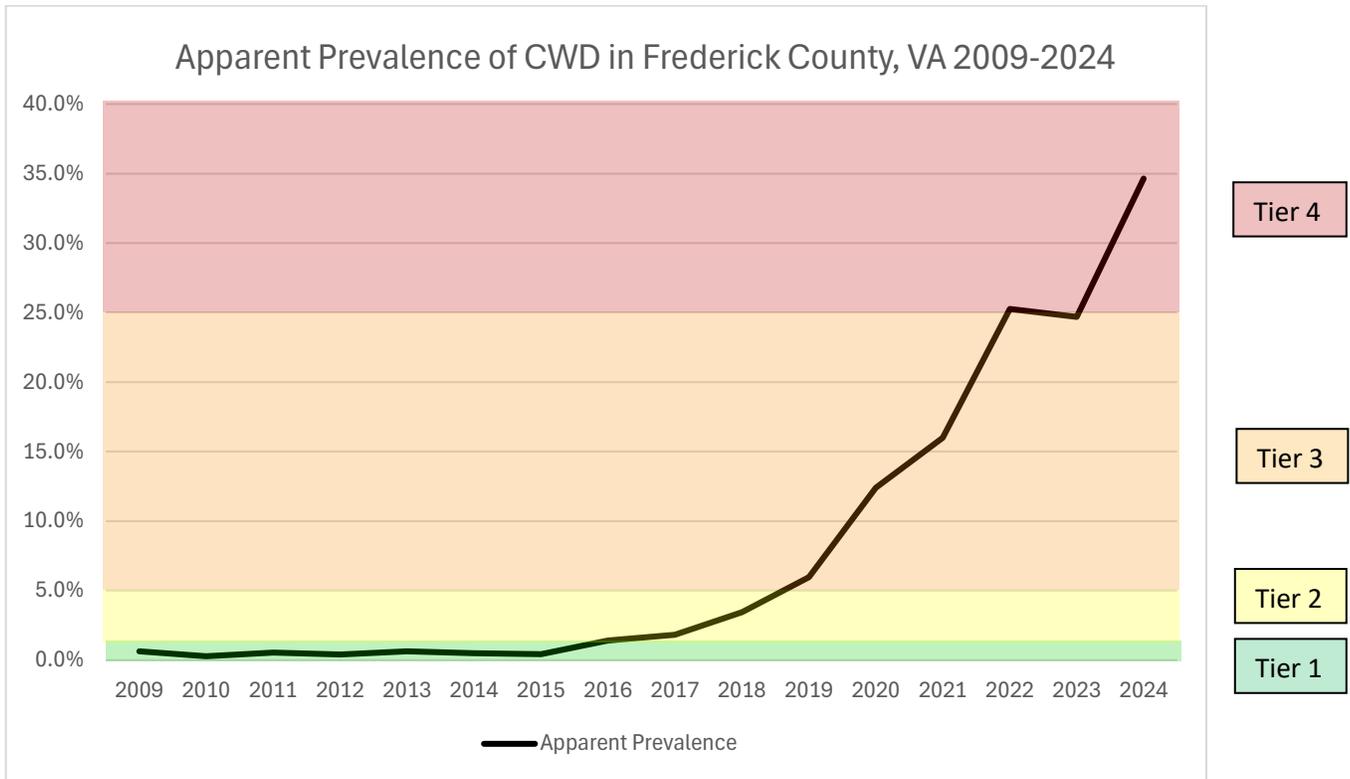


Figure 3. Apparent prevalence of CWD in Frederick County, VA from 2009-2024. The four different management tiers based on apparent prevalence are illustrated on this graph.

**Statewide**

**Goals for all areas of Virginia, regardless of current known CWD status, include the following:**

1. Minimize the risk of human-aided disease introduction.
2. Minimize the risk of localized disease spread.
3. Manage deer populations to balance cultural carrying capacity (CCC), requirements of the local ecosystem, and health of the herd.
4. Monitor deer populations.
5. Engage and communicate effectively with Department staff, stakeholders, other partners, the public, and the media in a timely, meaningful, and efficient manner.

**Strategies to meet these statewide goals include the following:**

- 1. Minimize the risk of human-aided disease introduction**
  - a. Enact statewide deer carcass disposal requirement.
    - i. Dispose of deer carcasses in landfills or at site of harvest.
  - b. Encourage all hunters harvesting deer to avoid long-distance transportation of whole deer carcasses.
  - c. Continued ban on import of high risk cervid carcass parts from out-of-state.
    - i. High risk parts may be taken to locations designated by DWR.
  - d. Eliminate fawn rehabilitation.
    - i. Alternative option: Review current fawn rehabilitation program/permit conditions to ensure disease transmission risk is as low as possible

- e. Maintain prohibition on captive cervid facilities and importation of non-permitted cervids.
- f. Maintain prohibition on use of natural deer urine products.
- g. Ensure all DWR staff handling and transporting deer and deer carcasses adhere to biosecurity protocols.

**2. Minimize the risk of localized disease spread**

- a. Enact statewide, year-round, cervid feeding ban.
  - i. Maintain prohibition on hunting over bait.
- b. Adjust harvest regulations or seasons to meet population objectives in deer management plan.
- c. Remove APRs in all counties or areas where they currently exist.
  - i. Do not initiate APRs in new counties or areas.
- d. Issue replacement tags for CWD-positive deer.

**3. Manage deer populations to balance cultural carrying capacity (CCC), requirements of the local ecosystem, and health of the herd**

- a. Encourage benefits of doe harvest through education and outreach.
- b. Implement strategies outlined in the 2027 Deer Management Plan to meet population objectives.

**4. Monitor deer populations**

- a. Assess harvest, CWD, and deer population trends and status annually.

**5. Engage and communicate effectively with Department staff, stakeholders, other partners, the public, and the media in a timely, meaningful, and efficient manner**

- a. Maintain internal communication throughout the season about any positive detections that may result in any kind of change to DMA boundaries, etc.
- b. Upon confirmation of positive detections in new counties, communicate findings with relevant partners.
- c. Issue press releases as needed.
- d. At the end of the season, publish an annual deer report and CWD report.
- e. Coordinate with Outreach Division as appropriate.

**Table 3.** Comparison of the goals and strategies for CWD management in Virginia by management tier

Goals	Strategies	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Minimize establishment of disease	Establish a Disease Focus Zone (DFZ) and initiate targeted removals and cluster sampling	X			
	Initiate communication plan with landowners in DFZ	X			
Minimize disease spread	Change or maintain current private land deer population objectives to low relative abundance	X	X	X	
	If population is not meeting objective, increase antlerless deer harvest	X	X	X	
	Increase antlered deer harvest	X	X	X	X
	Restrict cervid carcass transportation	X	X	X	X
Assess potential negative population impacts	Employ various survey methods to study disease and population dynamics at a finer scale				X
Maintain sustainable deer population despite endemic CWD	Adjust deer harvest regulations as necessary based on disease impacts				X

**Tier 1: Early CWD**

**Goals for counties with early detections and apparent prevalence below 1% include the following:**

1. Minimize establishment of disease.
2. Minimize disease spread to keep CWD prevalence low (below 1%).

**Strategies to meet these goals include the following:**

**1. Minimize establishment of disease**

- a. Consider establishment of a Disease Focus Zone (DFZ) for isolated detections more than 5 miles from the nearest detection.
  - i. Initiate [targeted removal](#) and cluster sampling of deer likely to have had contact with positive deer.
    1. Seek out landowner participation for targeted removals.
  - ii. Initiate communication plan with landowners in DFZ.

**2. Minimize disease spread**

- a. Change or maintain current private land deer population objectives to low relative abundance per the Deer Management Plan

- i. If the private land deer population status does not match the deer population objective, increase antlerless harvest the following deer hunting season by initiating new or additional harvest strategies. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - 1. Full-season either-sex in every season
  - 2. Earn-a-Buck
  - 3. Extended general firearms season
    - (a) 7-week general firearms season
    - (b) September antlerless season
    - (c) January – end of March antlerless season
  - 4. Unlimited antlerless harvest
- b. Increase antlered deer harvest by introducing new or additional harvest opportunities. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - i. Extra antlered deer tags valid for use only in specified counties/DFZs.
  - ii. Align the start of the general firearms season with the initiation of the early muzzle loader season.
  - iii. Initiate a velvet season.
- c. Restrict carcass transport based on DMA status or Tier.
- d. Assess county-level harvest data, CWD monitoring data, private land deer population status, and deer population objectives annually

## Tier 2: Transitioning to endemic CWD

**Goals for counties transitioning to endemic CWD and apparent prevalence between 1 and 5% include the following:**

- 1. Minimize disease spread to keep CWD prevalence below 5%.

**Strategies to meet this goal include the following:**

### 1. Minimize disease spread

- a. Maintain current private land deer population objectives at low relative abundance per the Deer Management Plan
  - i. If the private land deer population status does not match the deer population objective, increase antlerless harvest the following deer hunting season by initiating new or additional harvest strategies.
- b. Increase antlered deer harvest by introducing new or additional harvest opportunities.
- c. Restrict carcass transport based on DMA status or Tier.
- d. Assess county-level harvest data, CWD monitoring data, private land deer population status, and deer population objectives annually

## Tier 3: Endemic CWD

**Goals for counties with endemic CWD spread and apparent prevalence between 5 and 25% include the following:**

- 1. Minimize disease spread to keep prevalence as low as possible.

**Strategies to meet this goal include the following:**

## **1. Minimize disease spread**

- a. Maintain current private land deer population objectives at low relative abundance per the Deer Management Plan
  - i. If the private land deer population status does not match the deer population objective, increase antlerless harvest the following deer hunting season by initiating new or additional harvest strategies
- b. Increase antlered deer harvest by introducing new or additional harvest opportunities.
- c. Restrict carcass transport based on DMA status or Tier.
- d. Assess county-level harvest data, CWD monitoring data, private land deer population status, and deer population objectives annually

### Tier 4: Widespread endemic CWD

**Goals for counties with widespread endemic CWD and apparent prevalence above 25% include the following:**

1. Minimize disease spread.
2. Assess potential negative population impacts.
3. Maintain sustainable deer population to support the goals of the Deer Management Plan despite endemic CWD.

**Strategies to meet these goals include the following:**

## **1. Minimize disease spread**

- a. Maintain private land deer population objectives to low relative abundance per the Deer Management Plan.
- b. Increase antlered deer harvest by introducing new or additional antlered deer harvest strategies.
- c. Restrict carcass transport to Tier 4 counties.

## **2. Assess potential negative population impacts**

- a. Collaborate with researchers to employ various survey methods, such as harvest data, hunter surveys, citizen science camera trapping, survey routes, etc., to study disease and population dynamics at a finer scale.

## **3. Maintain sustainable deer population to support the goals of the Deer Management Plan despite endemic CWD**

- a. Adjust deer harvest regulations as necessary based on disease impacts.

## Elk Population Considerations

Virginia's Elk Restoration Zone was established in 2010 and encompassed all of Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise counties. All three counties share a border with Kentucky, and Buchanan County also shares a border with West Virginia (Figure 4). Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) conducted an elk restoration from 1997 to 2002, where over 1,500 elk were translocated from six western states into eastern Kentucky. Elk in Virginia come from natural dispersals from Kentucky and an intentional translocation of 75 elk from Kentucky to a restoration site in Buchanan County from 2012 to 2014. Kentucky's elk were chosen as a source population for Virginia's elk restoration due to the biological success of KDFWR's elk restoration program, the consistent absence of disease in sampled elk, their proximity to Virginia, and cooperation from KDFWR.<sup>53</sup> Before entering Virginia, elk had to complete a quarantine period in a Kentucky holding pen for disease surveillance and health testing. Validated CWD tests could only be performed on dead animals, so any elk found dead in the holding pen were tested for CWD. When Virginia's 2019–2028 Elk Management Plan was adopted, Virginia's elk program transitioned from a restoration phase to a management phase, and thus the Elk Restoration Zone became the [Elk Management Zone \(EMZ\)](#). As of 2025, over 250 elk inhabit Virginia, primarily within the EMZ, however, elk harvest occasionally occurs in neighboring counties, such as Tazewell, Russell, and Lee counties. (Elk harvest is legal during deer season with a deer tag in counties outside the EMZ to prevent elk from establishing in those counties).

Elk are susceptible to CWD, although research has shown they are less susceptible than deer.<sup>54</sup> Where elk and deer occur in the same geographic area, CWD prevalence rates among elk are typically lower than among deer.<sup>55,56,57</sup> Prion proteins occur at lower levels within retropharyngeal lymph nodes of infected elk than those of infected deer.<sup>55</sup> Further, elk demonstrate relatively low amounts of lymphoid prion shedding, leading to lower transmission rates.<sup>54</sup> Although the specifics of inter-species transmission has not been studied in-depth, at this time the greatest risk for the introduction of CWD into Virginia's elk population is likely from direct or indirect transmission from infected deer. Preventing unnatural interactions or congregations of elk and deer is crucial to minimize the risk of direct or indirect spread of CWD to elk. Moreover, because the epidemiology of CWD in elk and deer varies, the management approaches upon detection of CWD must also differ. For example, population density reductions have been used as a strategy for reducing CWD prevalence in deer in numerous states, whereas strategies to compensate for CWD-related elk mortalities (e.g., reduce elk hunting opportunities) are more common for elk.

The first goal of the Virginia Elk Management Plan is to manage elk in a manner that maintains a healthy and viable population within the EMZ and one of the strategies includes conducting active disease surveillance, minimizing risk of introducing new disease-causing agents into the elk population, and managing elk to minimize disease transmission between elk and other susceptible species.<sup>53</sup> Between 2002 and June of 2025, samples from 127 free-ranging elk were tested with no CWD detections. Table 4 shows the breakdown of free-ranging elk tested per county during this time. DWR investigates all reports of sick, abnormal, or dead elk, and whenever feasible, staff pursue necropsy to determine cause of death and/or collect samples for disease surveillance, including for

CWD. Additionally, CWD has not yet been detected in deer in the EMZ, with the closest detection being a single deer in 2023 from adjacent Tazewell County.

CWD can have negative effects on populations of elk, often at lower prevalence levels than in deer. Monello et al.<sup>58</sup> found that even without hunting or other sources of elk mortality in Rocky Mountain National Park, elk population declines could still occur if CWD prevalence reaches a certain threshold. Elk in the eastern U.S. are already much more limited in abundance and geographic range compared to western elk populations. Therefore, additive mortality from CWD is a greater potential threat to elk population sustainability in Virginia.

**Goals for CWD surveillance and management for elk in Virginia are to:**

1. Prevent CWD from reaching the Elk Management Zone and the elk population.
2. Detect CWD at low apparent prevalence within the Elk Management Zone and the elk population.
3. Minimize CWD transmission and negative impacts to the elk population if CWD is discovered within the Elk Management Zone or the elk population.

**Strategies to meet these goals include the following:**

- 1. Prevent CWD from reaching the Elk Management Zone and the elk population**
  - a. Consider cervid rehab ban within the EMZ and surrounding counties (no cervid releases).
  - b. Continuation of importation ban on high risk cervid parts into the EMZ from out-of-state or Virginia DMAs.
  - c. Manage the deer population to maintain no greater than a moderate relative abundance within and around the EMZ.
  - d. Consider CWD risk in any future intentional cervid translocations into or within Virginia.
  - e. Educating the public, particularly residents of the EMZ, about CWD.
- 2. Detect CWD at low apparent prevalence within the Elk Management Zone and elk population**
  - a. Maximize CWD surveillance efforts for elk and deer within the EMZ and surrounding counties.
  - b. Continue to investigate every report/observation of sick-looking or abnormally acting elk or deer (i.e. clinical suspects).
- 3. Minimize CWD transmission and negative impacts to the elk population if CWD is discovered within the Elk Management Zone or the elk population**
  - a. Continuation of the cervid feeding ban within the EMZ and possible expansion to surrounding counties.
  - b. Continue to closely monitor elk population numbers and demographics.
  - c. Remove clinical suspects from the population and landscape.
  - d. Compensate for CWD-related elk mortalities (e.g. reduce elk hunting opportunities).
  - e. Consider the specific characteristics of the EMZ when determining a response to trigger or border detections (e.g., DMA creation).
  - f. Employ deer management strategies to reduce CWD transmission as outlined throughout this plan.

- g. Communicate and work closely with surrounding states that have elk populations (Kentucky, West Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina) on CWD management efforts.



Figure 4. The Elk Management Zone of Virginia includes Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise counties. The Department translocated 75 elk from Kentucky to a reclaimed mine site in Buchanan County (red star) during 2012 to 2014 to restore the species to the Commonwealth.

**Table 4.** Number of free-ranging elk tested for CWD per county during Season Year 2022–2025.

SEASON YEAR	BUCHANAN	LEE	TAZEWELL	RUSSELL	GILES
2022	13	3	1	0	0
2023	13	0	1	0	0
2024	9	0	0	0	1
2025	16	0	0	1	0

## CWD Prevention, Surveillance, and Management in Captive Cervid Facilities and Hunting Enclosures

Per 4VAC 15-30-40, DWR has sole authority regulating the possession, movements, reporting, and monitoring of captive cervids in Virginia. As of January 1, 2026 there are eleven facilities permitted to hold and/or exhibit captive cervids in Virginia. Ten of these facilities are classified as category 1 facilities (exhibitors-zoos, museums, nature centers, and animal parks); while one is a category 2 (threatened and endangered species) facility. These facilities possess approximately 600 captive deer of nine species, with the majority being fallow deer. Additional species held by these facilities include: sika deer, axis deer, white-tailed deer, elk, Pere David, Tufted deer, Elds deer, and Muntjac. All captive facilities are inventoried and inspected annually for compliance with captive cervid permit conditions, which include submission of deceased individuals for disease surveillance as outlined below. Additionally, one registered deer hunting enclosure remains in Virginia in Wythe County. An annual registration letter and submission of a percentage of harvested animals for disease surveillance are required of the registered enclosure.

### **Goals of CWD prevention, surveillance, and management of captive cervid facilities and hunting enclosures include the following:**

1. Detect disease as early as possible.
2. Minimize introduction of CWD into a captive cervid facility.
3. Minimize contact between free-ranging and captive cervids.
4. Eradicate CWD from captive herd.
5. Follow the guidance provided in the Initial Response to Trigger and Border Detections section above to respond to a CWD detection in a captive cervid facility or hunting enclosure.

### **Strategies to meet these goals include the following:**

#### **1. Detect disease as early as possible**

- a. Captive cervids that die for any reason other than intentional culling: Submit head for CWD testing unless otherwise directed by DWR.
  - i. Examples: animal found dead on exhibit, animal humanely dispatched due to illness or injury, etc.
  - ii. Notify DWR within 48 hours of death to coordinate sample submission
- b. Captive elk, white-tailed deer, sika deer, and reindeer that are intentionally culled: Submit heads of all animals.
- c. Captive fallow deer, axis deer, muntjac, Pere David deer, tufted deer, and eld's deer that are intentionally culled: Submit heads of 10% (no more than 20 total) of total for each species.
  - i. Example: 10% (no more than 20 total) of culled fallow deer, 10% (not more than 20 total) of culled axis deer, etc.
- d. Require all captive cervid owners and enclosure operators to inform DWR staff of any animals showing clinical signs consistent with CWD (significant weight loss or poor body condition in combination with concurrent neurological abnormalities)
- e. Require submission of all non-hunting mortalities that occur in a registered hunting enclosure to DWR staff for CWD testing

- f. Require owners of hunting enclosures to submit heads from at least five adult deer harvested (or all heads, if less than 5 deer in total are harvested) each hunting season within the enclosure to their local district biologist for disease testing
  - g. Require an annual cervid inventory and fence line inspection of all captive cervid facilities
  - h. Perform an annual review of inspection records and data (i.e., CWD testing submissions, tags, import/export/transfers, etc.) and reconcile the CWD database with the captive cervid database for each individual facility or enclosure
- 2. Minimize introduction of CWD into a captive cervid facility**
- a. Humanely dispatch and collect CWD samples from any wild white-tailed deer that is found in a captive cervid facility
  - b. Humanely dispatch illegally imported and/or possessed cervids
- 3. Minimize contact between free-ranging and captive cervids**
- a. Humanely dispatch and test any captive cervids that escape from a captive facility that cannot be retrieved by the owner within 72 hours
  - a. Require annual fence line inspection of all registered and active enclosures and registered but inactive enclosures.
  - b. Require fence line inspection every 5 years of defunct enclosures until fence is taken down or deemed to not meet the intent of a hunting enclosure.
  - c. Maintain follow-up surveillance or periodically audit formerly registered hunting enclosures
  - d. Develop fence line recommendations for captive cervid facilities
  - e. Consider construction of an exterior fence if CWD is detected in a captive cervid or if CWD is detected in a wild cervid within 5 miles of a captive cervid facility
    - i. Costs associated with fencing improvements will be the responsibility of the owner of the captive deer facility
- 4. Eradicate CWD transmission within the cervid herd**
- a. Depopulate all captive cervids at the facility under applicable statutory and regulatory authority provided by emergency regulations and if federal or state funds are available for indemnification or the cervid facility owner volunteers to depopulate in the absence of indemnification.
    - i. Decontaminate the facility to the maximum extent possible following the [USDA-APHIS](#) guidelines.
      - 1. Costs associated with decontamination will be the responsibility of the owner of the captive deer facility.
      - 2. Prohibit re-population of facility with any species of cervid.
    - ii. Conduct trace-back and trace-forward epidemiological investigations to determine potential exposure(s) between the known positive cervid and other susceptible cervids
      - 1. Trace-forward herds – Remove and test exposed animal(s) if indemnity available or owner volunteers
        - (a) Consider the entire herd positive if an exposed animal is positive and follow depopulation procedures outlined in a. above.
        - (b) If indemnity funds are not available or owner will not voluntarily depopulate, then continue routine surveillance (test of death losses) for 60 months
          - (i) Consider conducting [RAMALT](#) testing on live, exposed cervids.
      - 2. Trace-back herds
        - (a) Quarantine herd for 60 months from the last case traced back to herd
        - (b) Conduct herd surveillance during quarantine

- (c) Consider conducting RAMALT testing on live cervids.
- iii. Develop herd and premises plans for all affected and trace-out herds if indemnity funds are not available and the captive cervid facility owner does not voluntarily depopulate.
  - (a) Herd/premises plan shall include cleaning and disinfecting procedures, future import and export of captive cervids from the facility, provision of and maintenance of fencing to prohibit access by wild cervids, and the time period for and testing requirements of surveillance
  - (b) Quarantine the facility for a minimum of five years.

## CWD Outreach and Engagement

CWD management is most effective when there is strong public support and participation. Outreach is an important part of keeping the public and partners informed and up to date on the status of CWD and associated regulations. It is also a necessity for providing guidance on how to prevent the spread of the disease. Outreach efforts require coordination with the Wildlife Health, Deer, and Elk teams as well as the Outreach Division to implement the most effective messaging.

Engagement is a crucial component to outreach that often involves human dimensions research to assess behaviors, attitudes, opinions, and perceptions in an effort to adaptively assess complex issues. The methodologies may include surveys, focus groups, polls, public comment periods, interviews, and more. Results from CWD engagement efforts related to CWD are posted on [DWR's website](#).<sup>59</sup>

### **Goals of CWD outreach in Virginia include the following:**

1. Educate the public on CWD and the current status of the disease in Virginia.
2. Increase public participation in surveillance and management actions.
3. Maintain public support for CWD surveillance and management actions.

### **Strategies to meet these goals include the following:**

#### **1. Educate the public on CWD and the current status of the disease in Virginia**

- a. Share the previous season's surveillance results and updates through press releases, annual reports, social media, and/or other avenues.
- b. Share positive detections in new counties through press releases and social media.
- c. Maintain a robust web page about CWD in Virginia.
  - i. Include relevant research.
- d. Provide updates to all DWR customer service and [Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline](#) staff on CWD status and management in VA that they can share with citizens who call about CWD and/or deer suspected to have CWD.
- e. Hold public presentations and engage media outlets.
- f. Work with stakeholder groups to disseminate educational information about CWD.

#### **2. Increase public participation in surveillance and management actions**

- a. Utilize emails, social media, podcasts, and other platforms to provide messaging.
- b. Create processes that prioritize ease and access for participants.
- c. Develop videos that illustrate ways that the public can be involved in preventing CWD spread.
- d. Engage the public and solicit feedback through human dimensions research, including but not limited to the use of surveys or other methods.
- e. Engage hunters and solicit feedback through routine human dimensions research.

#### **3. Maintain public support for CWD surveillance and management actions**

- a. Provide transparency on actions that DWR is taking.
- b. Share results from CWD-related human dimensions research with the public and post on DWR website.
- c. Use the results from human dimensions research to inform decisions.

# CWD Spillover: Current Knowledge of Risk and Prevention

## Background

To date, there have been no documented cases of natural transmission of CWD from deer to non-cervid species or humans. Numerous laboratory studies that address the possibility of transmission into other species have been conducted, some of which are highlighted below. Other prion diseases, or TSEs, exist in humans and other animal species, however most are highly host specific.

The growing body of science around CWD has led to the characterization of at least ten different strains of the infectious prion.<sup>60</sup> New strains are expected to continue to emerge over time, increasing the potential for spillover to other species. In the event that a spillover event is confirmed, it will be imperative that Virginia is prepared to respond to protect the health of wildlife, humans, and livestock. A coordinated effort among state (e.g., [Virginia Department of Health \(VDH\)](#), [Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services \(VDACS\)](#)), tribal, and federal (e.g., CDC) agencies will be necessary.

## CWD and Humans

No evidence currently exists to suggest that humans are able to develop illness from contact with CWD prions, through ingestion or otherwise. However, another TSE, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or “mad cow disease” has been documented to be transmissible to people through consumption of meat from infected animals. Studies with humanized mice suggest that spillover of CWD prions may theoretically be possible.<sup>61,62</sup> Out of an abundance of caution, human health agencies maintain a set of recommendations to minimize contact with CWD prions, and it remains a priority for DWR to limit human exposure to these prions.

Recommendations provided by the CDC<sup>33</sup> include:

- Do not harvest, handle, or eat animals that look sick or act strangely.
- Do not touch or eat meat from animals found dead (e.g., roadkill).

When field-dressing a deer or handling meat:

- Wear latex or rubber gloves.
- Avoid handling its internal organs, especially the brain or spine.
- Do not use knives or other tools you use in your kitchen.

After harvest:

- Consider having the deer or elk tested for CWD before you eat the meat.
- If your deer is processed commercially, consider asking to have your animal be processed individually. This ensures you are only getting meat from your animal.
- If your animal tests positive for CWD, do not eat meat from that animal.

Several different kinds of studies have been and are being conducted to understand any potential for CWD transmission to humans or impact the disease may have on human health. These include:

- Studies following hunters who have consumed CWD-positive venison
  - 6 years post exposure, no evidence of prion or neurological disease<sup>63</sup>
  - 15 years post exposure, no evidence of prion or neurological disease<sup>64</sup>
- Studies looking at rates of prion disease in hunters vs. the public
  - No evidence of increased prion disease in hunters compared to the general population in Colorado, Wyoming, and Wisconsin<sup>65</sup>
- Studies using humanized transgenic mice
  - Prion disease developed in humanized transgenic mice after [intracerebral inoculation](#) with CWD-infected [brain homogenate](#) from cervids<sup>61,62</sup>
- Studies in non-human primates
  - Clinical infection of squirrel monkeys after intracerebral inoculation with CWD-infected brain homogenate from cervids<sup>66,67</sup>
  - Prions detected in squirrel monkey tissues after [oral inoculation](#) with CWD-infected brain homogenate from cervids<sup>67</sup>
  - No clinical disease in cynomolgus macaques 70 months post intracerebral and oral inoculation with CWD-infected brain homogenate from cervids<sup>67</sup>

## CWD and Livestock

Although there is no evidence that any non-cervid species has become naturally infected with CWD, CWD prions have been successfully transmitted to non-cervid species through experimental methods.<sup>68,69</sup> Wild cervids and livestock routinely share space on the landscape, and the persistence of prions shed into the environment increases potential exposure. Additionally, research has documented uptake of CWD prions by plants, including some major forage species.<sup>23,70,71</sup> CWD spillover into any livestock species, but especially cattle, could have significant and far-reaching impacts to agricultural industries. Several barriers exist to detection of a spillover event, outlined in the 2025 publication by the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy.<sup>72</sup>

Several livestock species have been experimentally infected with CWD, including:

- Cattle:
  - Clinical infection after [intracranial inoculation](#) with CWD-infected elk brain homogenate<sup>73</sup>
  - Prions detected in cattle after intracranial inoculation with CWD-infected mule deer brain tissue<sup>74,75</sup>
  - Clinical infection after intracranial inoculation with CWD-infected cattle brain tissue<sup>76</sup>
  - Clinical infection after intracranial inoculation with CWD-infected white-tailed deer brain tissue<sup>77</sup>
- Swine:
  - CWD detected in pigs inoculated via intracranial and oral inoculation<sup>78</sup>
  - Prions detected in tissues of wild pigs<sup>79</sup>
- Sheep:
  - Clinical infection after intracranial inoculation with CWD-infected mule deer brain tissue<sup>80</sup>

## Financial Considerations

Previous research has demonstrated a decline in hunting demand and license sales attributed to CWD<sup>81</sup> and research is underway to try and quantify these impacts in Virginia. Many factors likely contribute to a loss of hunters after CWD detection, including human health concerns, additional regulation (carcass transport restrictions, etc.), and logistical hurdles (delay between processing and receiving test results, etc.)<sup>59</sup> In the long-term, as CWD prevalence in a population increases into the Tier 4 range, there may be additional loss of interest from hunters due to population impacts from CWD (younger deer herd, decreased deer density) and frustration from repeatedly harvesting CWD-positive deer. There are even concerns about how advanced CWD might affect recreational property or hunting lease values.<sup>82</sup> As a license funded agency, any loss of hunting interest has a negative economic impact on DWR. This reiterates the importance of continuing to fund prevention, management, and research of CWD.

Surveillance and management of CWD require significant investment from state, tribal, and federal wildlife agencies. For the FY26 budget cycle, DWR budgeted ~\$630,000 to CWD, including personnel and non-personnel expenditures (Figure 5). The majority of this allocation was reimbursable through federal grant programs, including the Wildlife Restoration Program of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (administered by USFWS) and the Wild Cervid Chronic Wasting Disease Management and Response Activities grant (administered by USDA-APHIS). The spread of CWD in Virginia since discovery in 2009 has been accompanied by continued growth in DWR's spending on the disease. In the absence of significant revenue generation or outside funding, continued expansion of current surveillance and management strategies to other areas will become financially unsustainable for the agency. In order to most efficiently spend limited resources, it will become increasingly important for DWR to rank priorities and strategies that fit the agency's goals.

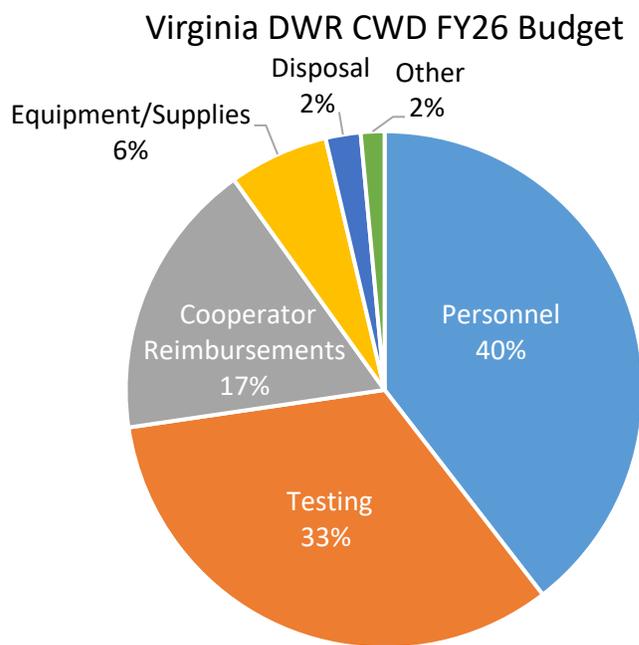


Figure 5. Virginia DWR's fiscal year 2026 budget breakdown of CWD-related costs.

As an example, Figure 6 suggests where DWR should prioritize surveillance efforts and funds. From the initiation of CWD testing in the state until the writing of this plan, CWD testing in DMA's has been provided at no cost to the hunter. Additionally, Hunters for the Hungry, the primary venison donation program in Virginia, requires all deer harvested from CWD-positive counties to be tested prior to donation, and DWR has historically paid for that testing. This includes not just hunter-harvested deer, but also deer removed during herd control programs in municipalities inside CWD-positive counties. Due to this, surveillance in some counties far exceeds sampling quotas and is not the most efficient use of limited funds. In the absence of increased agency funding, the same type of prioritization process will be important not just for surveillance, but for management, research, outreach, and other CWD related activities.

Suggested prioritization of CWD sampling effort

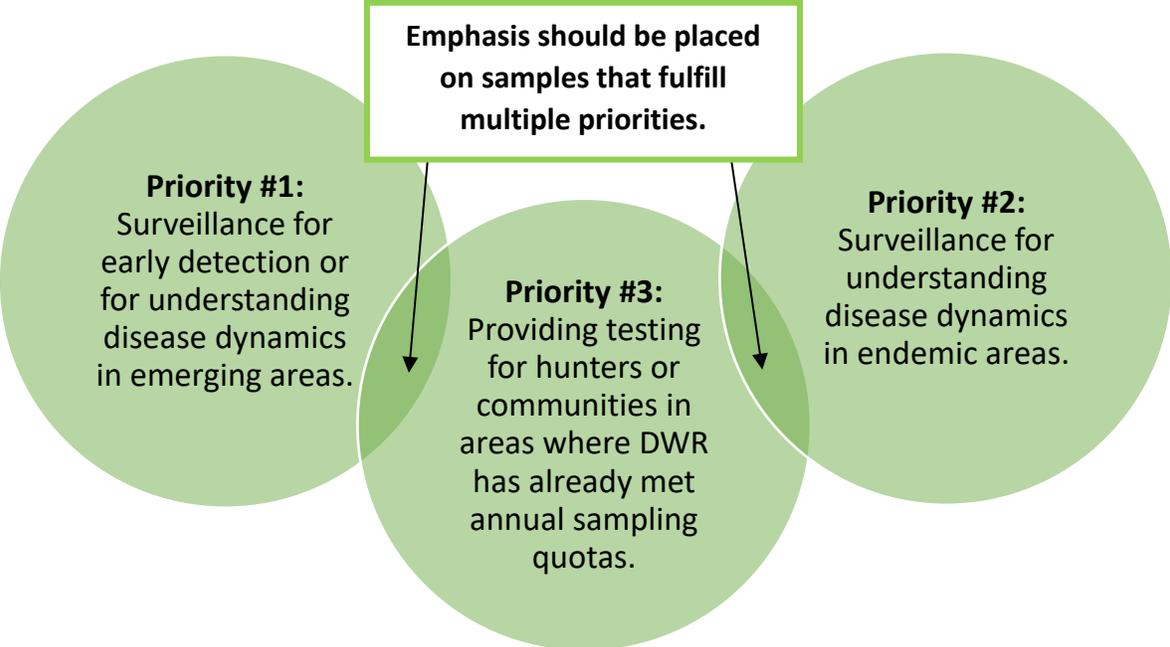


Figure 6. Suggested prioritization of CWD sampling effort.

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## Appendix A. Glossary of Terms

**Adaptive management:** A systematic approach for improving resource management activities and policies by learning from alternative management approaches. A concept whereby one learns from experience and modifies subsequent behavior in light of that experience.

**Antler point restrictions (APRs):** A harvest strategy intended to increase the number of older bucks on the landscape. In Virginia counties with APRs in effect, if a deer hunter kills two antlered bucks in a license year, at least one of the bucks must have at least four antler points, one inch or longer, on one side of the antlers.

**Apparent prevalence:** The proportion of confirmed CWD-positive cervids from a total sample of cervids tested in a specific area and time frame.

**Baseline surveillance:** A strategy to track CWD prevalence trends and geographic spread utilizing voluntary CWD testing at head drop site(s), at minimum. Expected annual sample total is 150 deer or less per county.

**Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE):** Prion disease of domestic cattle, also known as “mad cow disease.”

**Brain Homogenate:** A mixture created by breaking down brain tissue into a uniform liquid form.

**CDC:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Clinical suspect:** A cervid that exhibits clinical signs consistent with CWD infection. Although clinical signs of CWD infection are non-specific, they typically include significant weight loss in combination with neurologic impairment.

**Cluster sampling:** A CWD surveillance strategy focused on a specific area around a CWD-positive detection aimed at sampling family groups.

**CWD-positive county:** A county that has confirmed the death of a CWD-positive cervid within its borders.

**Disease Focus Zone (DFZ):** An approximately 3-mile radius around an outlier CWD detection, determined based on sex of deer, distance from known positives, geography, and other relevant factors. Harvested deer from the DFZ may or may not be required to be submitted for testing.

**Disease Management Area (DMA):** A defined geographic area that may include any county or clearly demarcated portion of a county within 10 miles of a trigger or border detection. The purpose of a DMA is to limit disease transmission and spread across the landscape by prohibiting carcass movements and fawn rehabilitation, reducing deer densities, etc.

**1:1 Earn-a-Buck (EAB):** A harvest strategy intended to increase the harvest of antlerless deer and reduce deer populations. Within a license year and within each individual 1:1 EAB county, a hunter must have taken at least one antlerless deer on private lands in that county before taking a second antlered deer on private lands in that county. In 1:1 EAB counties located east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where it is legal to harvest a third antlered deer, a hunter must have taken at least two antlerless deer on private lands in that county before taking a third antlered deer on private lands in that county.

**Elk Management Zone (EMZ):** Consists of Buchanan, Dickenson, and Wise counties in southwestern Virginia, where elk are being actively managed by DWR.

**Endemic:** An endemic area is a defined geographic area that has a reported apparent prevalence of 5% or higher.

**Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA):** A validated test used as a CWD screening test in cervids.

**Horizontal transmission:** Disease transmission that occurs between two individuals in a population. Horizontal transmission can be direct (e.g., through close or direct contact) or indirect (e.g., through a fomite or contaminated environment).

**Immunohistochemistry (IHC):** A validated test used as a confirmatory test for CWD infection in a cervid.

**Incubation period:** The time between from when an animal becomes infected to when it begins to show clinical signs of disease.

**Intracerebral or intracranial inoculation:** Transmission mechanism used in research settings where prions or brain homogenate are injected directly into the brain.

**Laboratory confirmed CWD-positive:** Trigger and border detections are considered laboratory confirmed after 1) a preliminary ELISA detection is confirmed with IHC at NVSL *or* any NAHLN laboratory accredited to perform the test, or 2) a preliminary IHC detection is confirmed with a second IHC performed at NVSL.

**Local DWR CWD Management Team:** Wildlife Health Coordinator, Wildlife Veterinarian, local Regional Manager, Forest Program Manager, Deer Project Leader, Deer-Bear-Turkey Biologist, local District Biologist(s), regional Lands and Access Manager, local Law Enforcement staff, Wildlife Health and CWD Technicians.

**National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN):** Network of USDA-approved laboratories used to perform ELISA and IHC testing.

**National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL):** USDA laboratory used to perform confirmatory IHC testing.

**Oral inoculation:** Transmission mechanism used in a research setting where prions or brain homogenate are fed to research animals.

**Post-season surveillance:** A monitoring effort initiated after the deer season has closed that utilizes kill permit deer, a special late CWD management season, road-kill, etc. to estimate apparent prevalence.

**RAMALT:** Rectoanal Mucosa-Associated Lymphoid Tissue that can be acquired with a rectal biopsy and utilized for CWD testing.

**Risk assessment:** Determines the existence and the magnitude of hazards that present risk of CWD prion introduction into the local wild white-tailed deer population.

**Targeted Removal:** A CWD management strategy aimed at removing deer within a DFZ that are likely to have been exposed to CWD.

**Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs):** A group of rare, progressive, and invariably fatal neurodegenerative disorders that affect the central nervous system in humans and certain animals. Also known as “prion diseases.”

**USDA-APHIS:** United States Department of Agriculture – Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

**VDACS:** Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

**VDH:** Virginia Department of Health

**Vertical transmission:** Disease transmission that occurs between an individual and its offspring (e.g., doe to fawn).

**Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline:** A resource for the public to contact with wildlife conflict or disease concerns.

**Weighted surveillance strategy:** A surveillance strategy designed to detect new disease foci in non-detect counties by focusing resources in areas determined to be highest risk for CWD introduction based upon the results of a risk assessment.