



Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

MEETING RECAP

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission Special-Called Meeting Dec. 14, 2023

NOTE: The following is a summary of information presented to the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission at a special-called meeting on Dec. 14, 2023. This meeting was informational only. No actions were taking by the Commission at this meeting. Official meeting minutes will be reviewed at a future meeting. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources provides this summary to enhance the public's awareness about potential changes to hunting, fishing, boating or other related regulations.

In a special-called meeting held Dec. 14, 2023, the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission convened to be briefed by agency staff regarding the first-time detection of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Kentucky and the implementation of the state's response plan to the appearance of the disease within the state.

Instigation Incident

On December 7, 2023, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources announced that Kentucky confirmed detection of CWD, a fatal neurologic disease that affects deer, elk and other species in the deer family from tissue samples collected from a 2.5-year-old male white-tailed deer harvested by a hunter in November 2023 in Ballard County.

The deer was harvested on opening day of modern gun deer season. Biologists collected tissue from the animal as part of ongoing CWD surveillance efforts and two separate tests confirmed the presence of CWD.

A CWD-positive detection initiated the state's response plan. The plan is adaptable and has evolved over 20 years based on new research and practices from other states.

Key Findings

- CWD was confirmed in a 2.5-year-old male white-tailed deer, harvested on November 11, 2023, in Ballard County.
- The detection was made during routine state-wide surveillance for the disease and confirmed via ELISA and IHC tests. *[Preliminary tests on a tissue sample from the deer were conducted at Murray State University's Breathitt Veterinary Center, where the Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) CWD test identified the sample as a suspect positive. Additional samples were sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa for an expedited Immunohistochemistry (IHC), a test that is used to detect the deposition of infectious abnormal proteins within specific cervid tissues, which confirmed CWD.]*
- The infected deer was harvested on private property in southeastern Ballard County.
- Increased sampling in the area (including Ballard County) between 2021 and 2023 because of reported cases nearby in Tennessee helped to boost the likelihood of this detection. To date, 89 samples in Ballard County have tested negative, with more results pending.

Response Plan and Actions

- Immediate notification of stakeholders was completed following the CWD detection.
- The department is assessing local deer densities and determining the required sampling volume to establish the disease's prevalence rate in the area.
- An epidemiological investigation, including genetic analysis, is underway. The origin of the deer is being investigated by comparing genetics from other states.

Next Steps and Regulatory Considerations

- No changes to deer regulations are planned for the remainder of the 2023 hunting season. This decision factors in the timing of detection, historically low harvest numbers for the remainder of the deer season, and potential communication and enforcement challenges with so little of deer season remaining.
- The department continues CWD sampling efforts in the area.
- Public meetings are planned for January in the Ballard County area for stakeholder engagement.
- A comprehensive deer management package is in preparation that will be presented to the commission in early 2024.
- Results from ongoing sampling are expected by the end of February. Neighboring states should also have sampling results at that time.

Communication and Reassurance

- The Commission stressed the importance of not panicking and reassured stakeholders that deer hunting would continue as usual, albeit with possible modifications to regulations aimed at minimizing spread of the disease.

- The state's preparedness to manage CWD was emphasized, drawing on experiences from other states and relying on Kentucky's robust surveillance strategies.
- Kentucky employs two types of CWD surveillance: a five-county CWD surveillance zone in western Kentucky due to a previous CWD detection in Tennessee, and statewide routine surveillance in the other 115 counties.

Meeting Conclusion

- The meeting concluded with a motion to adjourn, which was seconded and unanimously approved. There were no other votes taken during the meeting.

The meeting was livestreamed on the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' YouTube [channel](#), where a [replay](#) of the meeting is available on demand.

Individuals or organizations may contact their district representative on the commission about any pertinent topic of concern. Procedures for submitting public comments about current business items via email or in person are outlined in the agenda for each meeting, which is generally posted 1-2 weeks prior to the meeting date.

The commission, a [nine-member board](#) comprised of volunteers who serve four-year terms, recommends hunting, fishing and boating regulations on behalf of the anglers, hunters, and other wildlife-related stakeholders in the commonwealth. Any recommendation by the commission to amend or create a state administrative regulation must receive legislative approval before becoming law. The process of promulgating regulations spans several months.

The next quarterly commission meeting is scheduled for March 1, 2024, in Frankfort. Agendas will be posted at fw.ky.gov when available.

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