



Chris Danou's Capitol Report

DNR is Aware of CWD Concerns and Working on Solutions

For the past few weeks my legislative focus has been on the spread of CWD in Wisconsin. After the DNR released a report showing 9.4% of tested deer were infected with CWD, it became clear to me that our current approach to combating this disease is not working.

It's alarming that over 9% of the deer herd tested positive for CWD, but what's even more concerning is the highest percentage of infected deer resulted from the lowest number of tested deer since CWD was first discovered in 2002. That can only lead us to believe CWD is on the rise, and could be even more prevalent than we know.

In a response to the report, Rep. Nick Milroy (D – South Range) and I sent a letter to the Governor expressing our concerns and asking for more action to address this serious problem. As a result of our letter, we had a meeting with the Governor's Chief of Staff, which gave us the chance to convey some ideas we have based on our own research and what other states have done to combat CWD. Here are the specific ideas we discussed:

- Require double-fencing of captive deer farms to prevent CWD from spreading to the wild deer population;
- Study whether lures that contain deer urine or other bodily fluids or parts such as tarsal glands (attractants) contain CWD prions. (Other states have banned them);
- Analyze other states' baiting and feeding of white-tail deer statewide;
- Consider intensive culls in sites where new infections have been discovered;
- Restore the DNR Science Services Bureau positions that were eliminated in the 2015-17 state budget;
- Examine what the state of Illinois is doing to contain CWD and consider adopting those measures.

The CWD conversation continued last week when we met with DNR Deputy Secretary Kurt Thiede and members of his team, as well as interested groups and their government affairs representatives. It was an opportunity for us all to hear each other's concerns, learn more about the specifics of the deer hunting industry, talk about ways to combat the spread and find common ground between Democrats and Republicans.

The meetings also gave us the chance to reiterate our concerns and discuss some of our ideas, which are important to being proactive in managing the rise in CWD. Even more importantly, Rep. Milroy and I made it clear that we don't see this as a partisan issue, and that we want to work with anyone and

everyone with an interest in addressing CWD, no matter their party affiliation. So far Republicans have indicated an interest in working with Democrats as well.

Deer hunting has a \$1.3 billion economic impact in Wisconsin and it's an important part of our heritage and culture. We know we can't eradicate the disease in its entirety, but we must work together to effectively combat CWD today so there are quality hunting opportunities tomorrow.

While there is a lot of work to do and time is of the essence, I'm pleased with the work and progress that's been done the last few weeks. CWD has been detected in half of our 72 counties so it's important we act quickly and effectively to stop the rapid spread. After several rounds of initial meetings with many groups and stakeholders, I'm optimistic we will stay on track to do the necessary things needed to stop of the spread of CWD in Wisconsin.