



Media Release

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Rep. Shankland, Sen. Smith Introduce “Healthy Herd, Healthy Hunt” Legislation

MADISON, Wis. – Today, Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) and Sen. Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) introduced the “Healthy Herd, Healthy Hunt” legislative package to help reduce and prevent the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Wisconsin. CWD is an always fatal, contagious neurological disease of deer, elk, and moose caused by an abnormal protein called a prion, which can cause brain degeneration in infected animals and lead to extreme weight loss, abnormal behavior, and loss of bodily functions. Because CWD prions are highly resilient and can stay in the soil for a long time, it is important to contain their spread. The legislative package includes bills to provide funding for CWD research and management, funding for CWD testing kiosks, and funding for carcass disposal sites and dumpsters.

“Slowing the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease continues to be a high priority for the DNR,” said Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Secretary Preston Cole. “Increasing resources for department research and making it easier for hunters to support our statewide efforts through increased education, sampling, and carcass disposal options are critical steps toward slowing the spread of this deadly disease and protecting the health of Wisconsin’s deer herd.”

“With the fall gun-deer hunt beginning this weekend, the prevalence of Chronic Wasting Disease in our state’s deer herd is a real concern,” said Rep. Katrina Shankland. “We’ve heard repeatedly from the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, the Natural Resources Board, Wisconsin Green Fire, and County Deer Advisory Councils across the state about the importance of testing for CWD, properly disposing of deer carcasses, and educating hunters about the threat of CWD. I am pleased to introduce this timely legislation to help support the work the DNR is doing with additional support for CWD research, testing, and management, as well as more funding for deer carcass dumpsters and sampling kiosks.”

Pete Theisen, an avid hunter and Chairperson of the Portage County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC), added: *“You can have a sickly-looking deer test positive, or you can have the healthiest-looking deer in the world test positive for CWD. The worst thing I could imagine would be to accidentally give CWD-contaminated venison to a loved one and to have them get sick as a result. I appreciate this work to highlight the importance of getting your deer tested and making sure that’s accessible to everyone, no matter where they are in the state.”*

Sen. Jeff Smith concluded, *“The white-tailed deer herd has always been an integral part of Wisconsin’s great hunting heritage, contributing to our local economies and tourism industry. That’s why it’s critical we stay on top of the spread of CWD in Wisconsin. Like anything else, it costs money to study and learn about CWD, but the down payment we make now on testing and transmission prevention efforts is a small price to pay compared to the immeasurable amount we risk losing if we delay action any longer on CWD.”*

Advocates from Wisconsin’s Green Fire and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation also joined the bill authors this morning at a virtual press conference highlighting the introduction of the “Healthy Herd, Healthy Hunt” package.

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