



# NATIONAL DEER ASSOCIATION

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Mitch Lockwood  
Big Game Program Director  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, Texas 78744

12 October, 2021

## **RE: Proposed Amendments to Rules Governing Chronic Wasting Disease Management**

Dear Mr. Lockwood:

On behalf of the National Deer Association (NDA), I am writing to state our support for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's (TPWD) proposed rules governing chronic wasting disease (CWD) management that would impose new testing requirements for deer breeding facilities and incorporate the provisions of an emergency rule adopted on June 22, 2021. We are a national non-profit conservation organization with the mission to ensure the future of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting. We represent 30,000 members nationwide, including hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

The NDA supports the proposals to impose new testing requirements for deer breeding facilities and incorporate the provisions of emergency rule 46 TexReg 3991 in response to multiple detections of CWD earlier this year in deer breeding facilities. The intent of the proposed rules is to reduce the probability of CWD being spread from facilities where it does or might exist and to increase the probability of detecting and containing CWD where it does exist. After careful review, the NDA is confident that the intent of the proposed rules will be realized via a number of provisions. Specifically, the NDA supports, among others, the following provisions:

- Incorporation of the provisions of the current emergency rule in effect and comports of the existing provisions of the division accordingly, including provisions that address disease response with respect to indirectly connected facilities;
- Prioritizing post-mortem tests while allowing some flexibility via increased ante-mortem tests;
- Decreasing the required reporting window for results of post-mortem testing;
- Requiring a 'not-detected' ante-mortem test result prior to the release of any breeder deer;
- Tighter restrictions for breeder deer reported to the department as escaped and deer that cannot be confirmed as present in a breeding facility;
- Clarification of what high-risk deer parts may and may not be transported; and
- Clarification and updating of outdated or irrelevant language and terms.

The NDA is dedicated to ensuring the future of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting. The NDA outlines deer diseases as a critical focus area and slowing the spread of CWD is of primary concern. CWD is one of the largest threats to wildlife conservation that we have encountered over the last century. As many states have learned, preventing the spread of this always-fatal disease is a daunting task and early detection and rapid response once the disease is found is critical for long-term management. Through our extensive work on this issue across North America, we know that moving deer, dead or alive, can facilitate the disease's spread, including the transport of carcasses by hunters who can't be immediately



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sure if their deer is infected. CWD spreads the fastest and the furthest when carried in a vehicle, and that's something that all deer managers and hunters should be concerned about. The NDA believes that the best method for limiting the spread of CWD is to prohibit all transportation of live cervids and transportation of potentially-infected cervid carcasses and parts out of CWD zones.

Undoubtedly, the deer hunting tradition and industry in Texas has deep and widespread roots. Nationwide, about 80% of hunters pursue deer, and research has shown that CWD prevalence discourages hunter participation, ultimately threatening our deer hunting traditions and the Pittman-Robertson model of conservation funding. Now is the time to use all resources at the disposal of the TPWD to work with hunters, landowners and captive cervid facility operators to curb the troubling and rapidly-expanding spread of CWD in Texas.

The NDA appreciates TPWD's proactive and aggressive approach to managing CWD, including the proposed rules that will establish a more rigorous testing protocol than was previously required within certain deer breeding facilities and at release sites. These actions should minimize disease risk to the state's wild deer. The proposed rules also continue the existing extensive cooperation between the TPWD and the Texas Animal Health Commission and include the interests and involvement of various stakeholder groups.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions or for more information.

Sincerely,

Torin Miller  
*Director of Policy*