
INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource
Operations

Hunters asked to help track tuberculosis

VICTORIA – Deer, moose and elk hunters in the Cherryville area (Wildlife Management Unit 8-23) are once again being asked to assist with a project to confirm wildlife in the area are not infected with bovine tuberculosis.

Hunters are encouraged to drop off the heads of their harvested deer, elk or moose at collection freezers set up at Frank's General Store (1139 Highway 6, at the junction of Sugar Lake Road and Highway 6), the RT Ranch Sausage and Custom Cutting (39 Byers Road, off Highway 6, between Lumby and Cherryville), or the Province's District office in Penticton (102 Industrial Place, Penticton).

Bags and identification tags will be provided at the freezers. Arrangements can also be made to drop them off in Lumby by calling Susan Latimer at 250 547-9207. Antlers are not needed and should be removed because they take up too much freezer space.

In 2011, seven cases of bovine tuberculosis were found in local area livestock. Rigorous monitoring is in place, and there have been no reported cases since then, but a working group of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and the Ministry of Agriculture are undertaking this study to ensure that the disease has not transferred to wildlife in the area. So far there is no indication that wildlife are infected, but undertaking the study is an important step to confirm the disease is not present.

This is the second year of the program, which is planned to run for three years total. In the previous year only deer were tested, but this year the program is being expanded to increase both sample size and also check other ungulates in the area.

There are no specific signs of early infections of tuberculosis in animals. In some cases the only signs are microscopic so an apparently healthy animal may be affected. Because of this, testing for tuberculosis in wildlife is challenging. Examining lymph nodes (glands) in the head and the lungs can give an indication of disease presence, which is why obtaining hunter samples for detailed study is so important.

Bovine tuberculosis is a highly contagious disease that can debilitate and kill deer, moose, elk and cattle. The bacteria are primarily transmitted through close contact, coughing and sneezing, although fecal and urine contamination of shared feed and water sources can be involved. Infection is more likely to occur when there is close contact between individual animals, so high animal densities can play a role.

The type of tuberculosis that occurs in wildlife and cattle can infect humans but this is very rare. To prevent transmission, hunters should thoroughly cook meat and routinely wash their hands and wear gloves when field dressing game.

Learn More:

To learn more about bovine tuberculosis visit:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/wldhealth/diseases/specificdiseases/tuberculosis.htm>

To download a brochure with more information on tuberculosis in B.C. wildlife visit:

http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/wldhealth/TB_in_BC_wildlife_pamphlet.pdf

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