

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer

Chronic Wasting Disease

Although not currently found on or near the Refuge, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a fatal disease of the deer family (cervids) which includes Columbian white-tailed deer, black-tailed deer and elk. The disease is caused by mutated proteins known as prions (“pree-ons”), which can contaminate the environment and be transmitted between animals through their feces, saliva, urine, and other bodily fluids. Most animals with CWD appear normal until the end stages of the disease when they show signs of weight loss, lethargy, drooping ears, excessive salivation and urination, and loss of fear of people. There is no cure or vaccine for CWD. Once CWD enters a population, it can be difficult to manage and can reduce populations over time.

Washington’s first case of CWD was confirmed near Spokane on August 1, 2024 by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). For more information about CWD in Washington, visit <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/chronic-wasting#managing>.

CWD has not been detected in Oregon, however, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has increased surveillance throughout the state due to detections in neighboring states in recent years. For more information about CWD in Oregon, visit <https://myodfw.com/CWD>.

How can you help?

- Don’t feed wildlife: feeding and baiting artificially increases concentrations of animals and can enhance the spread of disease.
- Do not bring carcasses to the Refuge.
- Report sick or dead cervids:
 - On the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge to USFWS Staff at 360-795-3915
 - In Southwest Washington to WDFW at 360-696-6211 or use this [online reporting form](#)
 - In Oregon to ODFW at 866-968-2600 or by email to Wildlife.health@ODFW.Oregon.Gov
- Hunters can help by getting their harvested or salvage deer and elk sampled for CWD. To learn more:
 - In WA: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/chronic-wasting/surveillance-program#sampling>
 - In OR: <https://myodfw.com/CWD>