

OIA21-1216

29 November 2021

Robert McLeod

fyi-request-17253-356b7b97@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Robert McLeod

Thank you for your email of 18 October 2021 requesting information relating to chronic wasting disease (CWD). Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

You requested the following:

Can you please let me know what action is being taken to protect NZ deer farms from Chronic Wasting Disease or CWD.

CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) that affects members of the cervidae family. Of the six known TSEs to affect animals, none are understood to be present in New Zealand.

Biosecurity New Zealand's TSE surveillance programme ensures early detection of any TSE incursion. Under the programme, CWD surveillance includes the routine testing of samples collected from clinically healthy adult animals, sent to meat processing plants across New Zealand. Furthermore, if an animal is showing clinical signs of neurological disease, samples are supplied for testing, and veterinarians and farmers are compensated for the samples.

Further information on the TSE surveillance programme is available here:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/plans-for-responding-to-serious-disease-outbreaks/transmissible-spongiform-encephalopathies-tses/>. Additionally, the surveillance programme is reported annually in Biosecurity New Zealand's *Surveillance* magazine.

Previous publications of the magazine can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.sciquest.org.nz/surveillance>.

People in New Zealand have an important role to play in protecting the country from unwanted pests and diseases, including CWD. Staying alert and reporting any suspected exotic pests and diseases to Biosecurity New Zealand's hotline, 0800 809 966, is crucial. We strongly advise anyone who comes across cervid, either wild or farmed in New Zealand, with weight loss, stumbling, listlessness, or other neurological clinical signs to report to our hotline, so we can investigate. Information on how to report is available at:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/how-to-find-report-and-prevent-pests-and-diseases/report-a-pest-or-disease/>.

Strict biosecurity measures are also in place for those importing or entering New Zealand with used equipment that has been associated with animals or water. These measures, designed to help prevent an exotic pest or disease incursion like CWD, include:

- Inspection to verify that any equipment is clean, dry, and free of visible contamination.
- If contamination is found, the equipment is cleaned and disinfected using an agent listed from the approved Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) list of disinfectants.

Is there any kind of restriction on importing cervid products from countries known to have CWD?

Under the Biosecurity Act 1993, an import health standard (IHS) is required before biosecurity risk goods can be imported. IHSs are based on import risk analyses and describe the measures that must be applied so risk goods, like cervid products, can be imported safely. More information on IHSs can be found via the following link:

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/legal/compliance-requirements/ihs-import-health-standards/>.

The following IHSs enable the safe importation of cervid products from countries known to have CWD. Further information is available at their respective links:

- *Import Health Standard for the Importation into New Zealand of Frozen Inedible Deer By-products for Further Processing from Norway:*
<https://mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/1829>
- *Import Health Standard for the Importation of Deer/Elk Velvet into New Zealand from New Caledonia and Norway:* <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/1744-Deerelk-velvet-from-approved-countries-Import-Health-Standard>
- *Import Health Standard: Ornamental Products of Animal Origin:*
<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/1846-ornamental-products-of-animal-origin-import-health-standard>.

Deer lures and live deer are not eligible for importation from any country. Deer germplasm is not eligible for importation from any country known to have CWD.

Is there any plan in place to handle a CWD outbreak here?

Biosecurity New Zealand has plans in place for managing responses in the event of an exotic pest or animal disease incursion in New Zealand, such as CWD. We work alongside industry partners, including Deer Industry New Zealand as a Government Industry Agreement partner, in reviewing these plans, ensuring they are fit for purpose and take into account the specifics of the industry.

These plans include tracing and restricting animal movements from properties that are at-risk of CWD. For example, cervid farms that have had links with other infected properties, including neighbouring properties, through animal movements or vehicle movements that could spread biosecurity risk goods like faeces, urine, blood, etc. Once traced and restricted, testing would then be carried out. Farms not linked to the outbreak, but are showing clinical signs of the TSE disease, would also be restricted, traced, and tested.

Testing would also be undertaken at meat processing plants. Teams would follow strict biosecurity protocols, on-farm and at plants, ensuring the disease is not being spread.

Further to this, advice would be provided to farmers on the importance of good perimeter fencing to help limit interactions between farmed and wild cervid.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Wendy McDonald
Acting Director Diagnostic & Surveillance Services