

New Equipment at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory to Test Deer for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

- The Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries (ADAI), Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) and Alabama game breeder facilities have worked together to maintain an active CWD surveillance program since 2002.
- The CWD surveillance program tests samples collected from hunter harvested deer, captive deer facilities and any suspect animal.
- The equipment previously used at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Lab became inoperable, outdated and too expensive to replace, therefore, CWD samples were sent to a USDA approved lab out-of-state.
- ADAI and ADCNR have collaborated to purchase new CWD equipment that uses different testing procedures which provide more timely results. Qualified personnel dedicated to conduct this testing have also been hired at the State Veterinary Diagnostic Lab in Alabama
- The equipment and test kits are undergoing a validation process required by USDA, National Veterinary Services Laboratory.
- The recent case of CWD in a free-ranging white-tailed deer in west Mississippi prompted ADAI to announcement the purchase of this equipment now. The State Veterinary Diagnostic Lab will be one of the only state labs in the area approved to run this test.
- CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) that affects deer, elk and other cervids. It is believed to be caused by a prion or protein that is infectious and has a long incubation period.
- There are currently no live animal tests for the disease.
- Testing is done by sampling brain tissue and lymph nodes.
- Again, the CWD surveillance program has been in place since 2002 and there has never been a positive case of CWD in Alabama.
- This disease does not affect domestic livestock or humans.