

Chronic Wasting Disease Inquiry (phase II)

How to talk about CWD: Identifying messages that resonate with hunters

Draft outline

8/26/2019

Background

As attention to chronic wasting disease (CWD) increases throughout the United States and Canada, state (and provincial) fish and wildlife agencies need to better understand hunters' perceptions and concerns about the disease and how these may affect hunting behavior. Recent human dimensions efforts in Colorado provided valuable insight into hunters risk perceptions and behaviors (Quartuch, in-prep) but there is a relative dearth of information regarding how best to convey messages about CWD and specifically, the importance of CWD testing to hunters and the public. Effectively communicating with hunters about CWD has the potential to enhance the wellbeing of humans and wildlife alike.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Commission recently adopted a statewide CWD response plan ([Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2019](#)) but CPW would benefit from additional information about which messages resonate with hunters in order to most effectively enact the plan and manage the disease. Thus, the overarching goal of this study is to identify effective communication messages about CWD testing. Specifically, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, we will identify information gaps with respect to CWD testing by learning about the experiences of hunters who recently complied with CWD testing regulations. This segment of the hunter population will provide a nuanced perspective about CWD testing having recently submitted their harvested animal(s) for testing during the previous hunting season(s). Second, this effort will test various communication messages about the importance of CWD testing with these individuals allowing state agencies (e.g., Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment) to enhance communication efforts with hunters more generally. Two primary objectives guide this research:

1. To identify the experiences of hunters who have complied with CWD testing requirements.
2. To test which communication messages resonate with hunters who have complied with regulations on submission of harvest samples for CWD testing.

Research methods

A mail-back questionnaire will serve as the primary means to collect data with an online option made available for those who wish to participate electronically.

Sampling design

Resident and non-resident deer hunters who complied with mandatory CWD testing in 2018 constitute the target audience for this inquiry. In total, 3,000 deer hunters will be included in the final sample. This represents approximately 56% of all hunters who had their harvested animal(s) tested in 2018.

Description of survey instrument/implementation

The survey instrument will explore six primary themes including hunters': (1) knowledge about and awareness of CWD, (2) concerns about the disease, (3) preferences for managing CWD, (4) experience(s) with the submission process, (5) attitudes regarding messages about CWD testing, and (6) socio-demographic characteristics.

Survey questions assessing themes 1 - 3 and theme 6 will be based on previous CWD research in Colorado (Needham, Vaske, & Manfredo 2005; Quartuch, in-prep). Questions assessing themes 4 and 5 will be developed in conjunction with CPW and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) staff and, when available, previous research (e.g., Needham, Vaske, & Manfredo 2005).

The questionnaire will be implemented using a modified Dillman Tailored Design method (2014). A cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, a hard-copy questionnaire, and postage-paid envelope will be mailed to everyone in the sample. A link to the online questionnaire will be provided in the invitation letter. A reminder postcard will be mailed one week later. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a second questionnaire and cover letter will be mailed to non-respondents. A final reminder postcard will be mailed to non-respondents two weeks later.

Timeline

The timeline for this effort will span August - December 2019 with deliverables finalized in spring 2020.