CWD

SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL

Report on surveillance operations

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

2024

Votre gouvernement

Québec

In 2018, 11 cases of chronic wasting disease (CWD) were detected on a red deer farm in the Laurentides region. From fall 2018 to fall 2023, the Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs (MELCCFP) implemented the following regulatory measures to reduce the risk of the disease becoming established in wildlife and to prevent its spread to other parts of Québec:

- Certain anatomical parts of cervids harvested within a 45-km radius of the affected farm were not to be transported outside that radius;
- Hunters who harvested a white-tailed deer or a moose over 12 months of age within that same radius were required to have their game tested.

After seven years of intensive surveillance, no cases of CWD were detected in wild cervids near the affected farm. These results led the Ministère's experts to conclude that the risk of the disease being present in wild populations is relatively low. As such, the transportation restrictions and mandatory sampling measures for cervids harvested within a 45-km radius of the affected farm were lifted in 2024.

Chronic wasting disease in cervids

CWD is a contagious disease in cervids that causes the fatal degeneration of the central nervous system.

No treatment or vaccine is currently available to fight this disease.

At this time, there is no scientific evidence that CWD can be transmitted to humans.

When it is well established in wild cervid populations, CWD is impossible to eliminate.

In the long term, if the disease is not controlled, it may lead to a significant and irreversible decline in wild cervid populations.

As a precautionary measure, the Ministère maintained enhanced surveillance in 2024. In addition, to limit the transmission of the disease if it is present in wild animals, the Ministère issued antlerless deer hunting licences in order to maintain low deer densities in the area where the disease had been detected in farmed animals.

2024 surveillance results

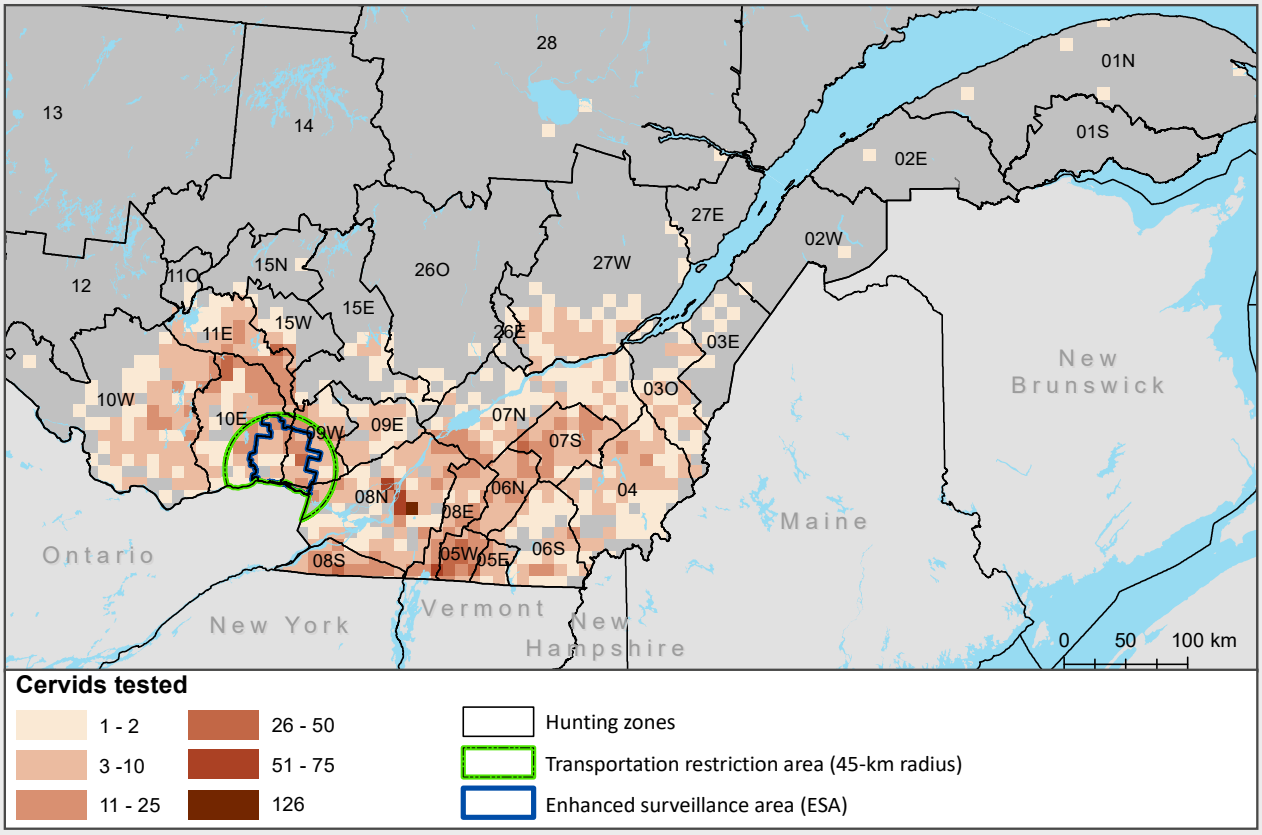
No cases of CWD detected

4,915 wild cervids tested

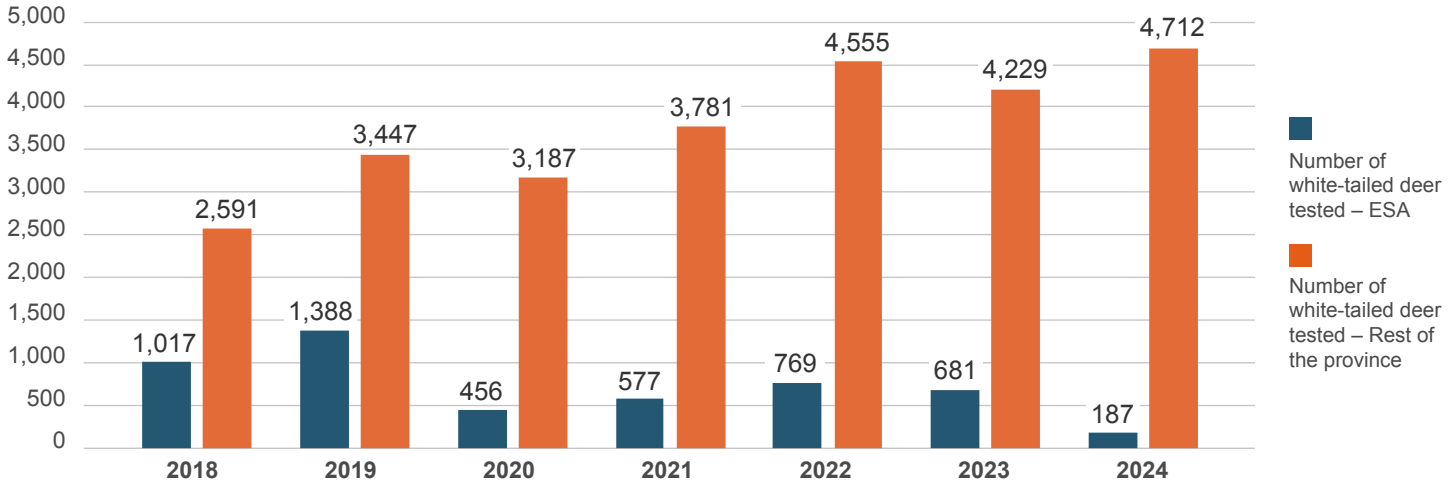
- **187 deer in the enhanced surveillance area (ESA)**
- **4,712 deer, 12 moose and 4 caribou elsewhere in Québec**

Highlights

- In 2024, only 26% of the deer harvested in the enhanced surveillance area (ESA) were tested, compared to 98% from 2018 to 2023, when sampling was mandatory.
- The participation of 70 butcher shops enabled the collection of 4,877 samples from white-tailed deer harvested during hunting activities in Québec.
- Seven hundred (700) antlerless deer hunting licences were issued in the portions of hunting zones 9 West and 10 East included in the ESA.
- Since the disease was detected, the Ministère has tested over 31,800 wild cervids in Québec, including more than 5,200 in the ESA.
- CWD has never been detected in wild cervids in Québec.
- Work is underway to permanently prevent wild cervids from coming into contact with vegetation and soil immediately surrounding the enclosures where infected animals were detected in 2018. A second fence will be installed around certain enclosures, among other measures.



Number of cervids tested for CWD in Québec in 2024 and location



Number of white-tailed deer tested for CWD per year in the ESA and in the rest of the province, from 2018 to 2024. Sampling was no longer mandatory in 2024.

Certain measures still necessary

It is essential to continue enhanced surveillance of CWD in wild white-tailed deer around the farm infected in 2018. Indeed, the disease may be present in wildlife even if it has not been detected. When few individuals are affected, testing a large number of deer is necessary to allow the disease to be detected. If surveillance is not rigorous enough, CWD may only be detected once several animals are infected. At that point, it will be too late to attempt to eliminate the disease from the territory. This is why the Ministère is encouraging hunters to contribute to sampling efforts over the coming years.

In addition, maintaining low deer densities in the area where the disease was detected for a few more years will help reduce contact between wild animals, thereby limiting the transmission of the disease if an infected animal is present in the wild. To this end, antlerless deer hunting licences will once again be issued in the ESA for the 2025 season.

To learn all the details:
www.quebec.ca/cervidsdisease.

Environnement, Lutte contre les changements climatiques, Faune et Parcs
Québec

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