

NEWS

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

P. O. Box 402, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0402

www.state.nj.us/dep



Bob Martin, Commissioner

IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sept. 18, 2012

CONTACT: Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795

Bob Considine (609) 984-1795

Lawrence Ragonese (609) 292-2994

PUBLIC ADVISED TO BE ALERT FOR NEW JERSEY DEER THAT MAY HAVE EHD VIRUS; DISEASE CANNOT BE TRANSMITTED TO PEOPLE

(12/P105) TRENTON - The Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife is advising hunters and other outdoors enthusiasts to be alert for white-tailed deer that may be experiencing symptoms of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), a virus that spreads among deer through the bites of midge flies but cannot be transmitted to people.

EHD is strictly a wildlife issue. It cannot be transmitted to people, and humans are not at risk by handling infected deer, being bitten by infected midges, or eating meat from deer affected by the virus. The Division of Fish and Wildlife, however, strongly advises against consuming meat from any game animal that appears ill.

The variant of the disease common to New Jersey is relatively benign in livestock where it usually goes unnoticed, and it is not transmissible to humans.

EHD Type 2 Virus has been confirmed in Gloucester, Salem and Warren counties. Test results are pending from Cape May, Cumberland, Camden, Monmouth and Middlesex counties. Suspected cases have also been reported in Burlington County, but samples have not yet been collected from that area.

"EHD is a common viral disease in deer that is contracted only from the bite of a species of midge. It does not spread from deer to deer and outbreaks end with the onset of cold weather, which kills the midges that spread the disease," said David Chanda, Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife.

The U.S. Geological Survey's Wildlife Health Center recently indicated that outbreaks in the U.S. this fall have the potential to be more severe for various species of deer because widespread drought and high temperatures caused lower water levels, creating more muddy areas favored by midges. In addition, herd immunity to viruses may be low because five years have lapsed since the last large outbreak.

In 2007, the first outbreak of EHD Type 2 in New Jersey occurred from Morris to Salem counties. Smaller outbreaks occurred in 2010 in Salem County and in 2011, mainly in central and northern New Jersey.

In last year's outbreak, EHD Type 2 Virus was confirmed in Mercer, Middlesex and Morris counties but suspected cases were also reported in Somerset, Union, Hunterdon and Burlington counties. The midge that carries the virus is known as *Culioides sonorensis*.

Signs of EHD include difficulty standing, drooling, and foaming from the mouth or nose. Dead deer with no apparent wounds observed in or near water may have died as a result of EHD.

Deer typically die within 5 to 10 days of infection. Infected deer initially lose their appetite and fear of people. They grow progressively weaker and often salivate excessively.

As the disease progresses, infected deer develop internal hemorrhaging and hemorrhaging around the eyes and mouth. They breathe heavily and develop a fever. Infected deer pass into a shock-like state, become prostrate and die. Infected deer frequently die beside water where they have gone to drink or to attempt to cool off.

Deer exhibiting signs of EHD should be reported to the Division's Office of Fish and Wildlife Health Forensics by calling Bill Stansley at (908) 236-2118 or the Bureau of Wildlife Management: Northern Region - Carole Stanko or Dan Roberts, 908-735-7040; Central Region - Jodi Powers, 609-259-6965; Southern Region - Joe Leskie, 609-748-2043 or Carole Stanko at (908) 735-7040.

Livestock infected with EHD may show clinical signs similar to a number of other livestock diseases. People suspecting these diseases should test their animals and can seek information from the State Veterinarian's Office at (609) 671-6400.

###