

## **13.6 Appendix 3: National Standards for the Chronic Wasting Disease Voluntary Herd Certification Program**

### **Introduction**

The national Chronic Wasting Disease Voluntary Herd Certification Program (CWD VHCP) will be referred to in this document as the VHCP. Participation in the VHCP is optional; however, once owners/cervid farm operators are enrolled in the VHCP, their compliance with the National Standards and the standard operating procedures (SOP) in their regional VHCP is mandatory.

The objectives of the VHCP are to provide owners/cervid farm operators with a means of detecting and preventing introduction of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in their herd, and the opportunity to have their herds identified as “low risk” with respect to CWD. There is recognition that the risk of CWD diminishes to low with progressive participation and successful annual advancement in the VHCP. Enrolment in the VHCP provides reasonable assurance that purchasing cervids from owners/cervid farm operators enrolled at the same or higher level of the VHCP maintains the farm’s current level of risk specific to exposure to CWD. Import requirements of other countries for cervids may be based on enrolment or activities under the VHCP. An owner/cervid farm operator of a licensed (where applicable) farmed cervid premises may enroll in the VHCP.

The VHCP requirements apply to all cervids of the family Cervidae, and involve the four VHCP pillars: 1) maintenance of accurate, complete inventory records in which all cervids are accounted for; 2) ongoing testing of deaths and slaughter cervids; 3) limiting herd introductions to enrolled cervids of a similar or higher VHCP level; and 4) implementation of the VHCP biosecurity measures.

There are six levels in the VHCP, from the entry level, E, through levels D, C, B, A, to the highest level, “certified”. A herd at certified level is not considered “CWD free”; rather, it indicates to potential purchasers that the herd is “low risk” for CWD, as all VHCP requirements set out in the National Standards, including surveillance, have been followed for a minimum of five years. Ongoing surveillance of deaths in the herd for any reason continues to monitor for the presence of CWD. Since there is currently no validated test to rule out CWD in individual live cervids, “low risk” status is based on the required post-mortem surveillance testing, absence of clinical signs, biosecurity, lack of exposure to CWD over a designated period of time, and restriction of cervids entering the herd to those of equivalent or higher status.

The VHCP is currently used for trade between owners/cervid farm operators within Canada, for export outside of Canada, and for individual risk mitigation on enrolled farms.

The VHCP is carried out in co-operation with cervid owners, cervid farm operators, accredited veterinarians, provincial/territorial governments, outside contractors (e.g. Canadian Sheep Federation) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The roles

assumed by each of these organizations may vary in different geographic regions of Canada.

If the herd (or any cervid in the herd) is suspected of being, or proves to be, infected with CWD at any time during its enrolment, the herd will automatically be suspended, by the status assessor, and may be investigated under any applicable CWD disease control program.

## **1. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **1.1 National Administrator**

This role and the associated responsibilities will be assumed by the CFIA in all situations. Through the use of a consultative process, the CFIA is responsible for the development of national standards for the VHCP, its audit and oversight, including the following:

- developing and setting the national VHCP standards in consultation with provincial/territorial governments and industry;
- undertaking a review of the National Standards of the VHCP to modify and update as required;
- providing the current National Standards (and any update directives) to the organizations responsible for regional administration (see *1.2 Regional Administrator*);
- reviewing any CWD herd certification program proposed for a specific region of Canada and determine equivalency to the published VHCP National Standards;
- conducting audits of VHCP design and implementation to verify that the VHCP in a particular region of Canada meets the national standards;
- negotiating international recognition of the VHCP and endorsing export certification by the CFIA, which will only be done for those VHCP certifications in good standing, and judged by the CFIA to meet the national standards;
- designing and implementing a quality assurance program for non-CFIA laboratories performing transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) testing;
- ensuring the maintenance of a publicly accessible report (e.g. published on the CFIA website, or links to a status assessor's website) of all enrolled herds and their status. This report will be updated on a quarterly basis;
- performing all confirmatory testing on CWD-suspect or CWD-positive tissue samples at CFIA's National and OIE Laboratory for CWD. In the case of a confirmed positive cervid, the CFIA will implement an official disease control program; and
- reporting to the status assessor all premises quarantined for CWD by the CFIA when the quarantine is both applied and removed, and reporting all non-negative test results and ensuing confirmatory results.

### **1.2 Regional Administrator**

This role and the associated responsibilities may be assumed by a national or provincial/territorial industry group, or a provincial/territorial government. The regional administrator is responsible for overseeing enrolment in the VHCP for a particular region of Canada, including the following:

- developing a VHCP that meets the national standards, and outlining all policies and procedures of that regional VHCP in a set of standard operating procedures (SOP);
- developing and distributing an agreement (application form) for entry into the VHCP, which is signed by the owner/cervid farm operator and the accredited veterinarian. This agreement must include a statement protecting the CFIA from any liability arising from the regional VHCP;
- developing and distributing forms required for the VHCP, including application, inventory, and annual report forms. The producer's annual report form will include a statement or checkbox indicating that there are no significant changes to the cervid operation ;
- enrolling owners/cervid farm operators once they have met the requirements of the VHCP;
- collecting and collating all data on enrolled herds in that region;
- producing an inventory report, based on the previous year's inventory, and providing it to the appropriate program delivery person at least one month prior to the start of the anniversary quarter;
- upon request, issuing certificates indicating the status of a herd or the status of an individual cervid from that herd;
- informing the national administrator of the status of all enrolled herds on a quarterly basis;
- appointing and training status assessors and program delivery personnel. If a provincial/territorial program for accredited veterinarians is developed, it would need to be reviewed and approved by the CFIA;
- informing all enrolled owners/cervid farm operators, as well as staff of the regional administrator and status assessors, of any updates regarding the VHCP; and
- designing an appeal/review process for decisions made with respect to the VHCP that is in compliance with national standards.

### **1.3 Status Assessor**

The role of assessor of herd status may be assumed by a national or provincial/territorial industry group, or a provincial/territorial government. The status assessor is responsible for the following:

- receiving and reviewing completed applications for enrolment into the VHCP;
- accepting herds into the appropriate level of the VHCP or informing the owners/cervid farm operators or the responsible veterinarian of any outstanding requirements that prevent enrolment at that time;
- verifying the reconciliation of the herd inventories;

- approving all changes in status and posting the status publicly (as outlined in *2.3 Suspension/Revocation/Appeals*, *2.4 Reporting* and in the regional administrator's SOP);
- investigating non-compliance with VHCP requirements, and suspending (and/or revoking) VHCP status when required;
- communicating suspension to the owner/cervid farm operator;
- investigating herds that are suspended and proceeding with reinstatement (at either the same or a lower level) or revocation of VHCP status;
- informing the regional administrator of the VHCP of changes in the status of a herd (additions, suspensions, revocations) as they occur; and
- implementing and conducting the appeal/review process;
- developing and implementing a protocol for the reporting and re-introduction of escaped farmed cervids. A decision on the disposition of the escaped cervid(s), when recovered, will depend on a risk assessment of the level of CWD found in wild cervids in the immediate area.

#### **1.4 Program Delivery**

Owners/cervid farm operators have overall responsibility for program compliance and ensuring program delivery. Program delivery is carried out in collaboration with an accredited veterinarian or a provincial/territorial official veterinarian, with or without approved third parties, with each having a particular role. Veterinarians wishing to become accredited by the CFIA for the VHCP should contact their CFIA district veterinarian.

Accredited veterinarians are accredited by the CFIA or the appropriate Regional Administrator's provincial/territorial government (where a provincial/territorial accreditation process exists). Official veterinarians are employed within a provincial/territorial department responsible for the administration of the regional VHCP. Accredited veterinarians and official veterinarians are authorized to conduct all aspects of program delivery, including performing the physical inventories, annual inspections, and sample collection.

Accredited veterinarians or official veterinarians are specifically responsible for the health of the cervid herd and program biosecurity measures (standards) which are designed to prevent CWD entering cervid herds enrolled in the VHCP. This role may also be filled by trained and qualified provincial/territorial staff of the VHCP department (eg. game farm inspectors, etc.). These responsibilities include:

- reviewing the requirements of the VHCP and responding to questions from the owner/cervid farm operator applying for or enrolled in the VHCP;
- verifying the accuracy of the site plan and noting any potential biosecurity concerns which may impact the CWD health of the herd;
- assessing the actual facilities and structures (as indicated on the site plan) on a premises proposed for enrolment in the VHCP, and verifying their compliance to program standards;

- teaching the owner/cervid farm operator to recognize the clinical signs of CWD, and providing information on the epidemiology of the disease and herd management to prevent CWD;
- conducting (or supervising) the herd inventory (including the physical inventory), and performing the annual inspection;
- assessing the health of the herd to determine whether any cervid is demonstrating clinical signs of CWD;
- immediately notifying the CFIA of the existence of any cervid suspected of having CWD;
- collecting and submitting tissue samples from dead cervids or those that are destroyed, as may be requested;
- ensuring that, for all cervids presented for CWD sampling, all identification devices have been verified *in situ*;
- verifying that all VHCP requirements are met, including verifying the reconciliation of the inventory;
- checking records, signing any necessary reports, including initial VHCP application form and annual reports.

Approved third parties are approved by the regional administrator as eligible Program deliverers, and are trained and qualified to deliver certain aspects of the VHCP.

Approved third parties may be staff of a provincial/territorial department or agency, an animal health technician who is registered under the appropriate provincial/territorial licensing body and supervised by an accredited veterinarian, or a CFIA veterinarian or inspector. Approved third parties are trained, qualified and approved for:

- performing annual inventories—counting **all** cervids and recording at least one unique identifier for each cervid on a premises;
- performing physical inventories—counting **all** cervids and recording **all** identification devices. Any cervids showing signs of ill-health are identified to the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian for further examination;
- checking fences if required;

A certified CWD sample collector is an individual who has completed appropriate training and is certified by the regional administrator as authorized to collect samples for CWD testing. A certified CWD sample collector may be an approved third party or a cervid farm operator. He/she must operate at arm's length from the owner/cervid farm operator and may not collect samples from his/her own animals. A certified CWD sample collector is responsible for ensuring that, for all cervids presented for sample collection, all identification devices have been verified *in situ*.

## 1.5 Laboratories

A CFIA-approved laboratory is a laboratory that is part of the CFIA National TSE Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Network (NTSE-VDLN), and that meets the quality assurance requirements for approved CWD tests (see *13.6 Appendix 1C* of the *Accredited Veterinarian's Manual*). Laboratory approval is accompanied by training and the

implementation of a quality assurance program established by the CFIA. Laboratories providing diagnostic testing services for the VHCP are responsible for the following:

- receiving, preparing and testing tissue samples in accordance with the CFIA national protocol for the diagnosis of CWD (Inter-Laboratory Quality Guidelines of the CFIA National TSE Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Network);
- participating in the Inter-Laboratory Quality Assurance Program under the advice of the CFIA's National and OIE Reference Laboratory for CWD, as described in the protocols listed in the Inter-Laboratory Quality Guidelines of the CFIA National TSE Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Network;
- reporting of non-negative test results as outlined by CFIA;
- forwarding non-negative samples to CFIA's National and OIE Reference Laboratory for CWD (in Ottawa) for confirmation (the results being reportable to the status assessor for suspension purposes but not being reportable to the accredited veterinarian or owner/cervid farm operator at this stage);
- reporting negative test results to the owner, the accredited veterinarian responsible for the herd, the status assessor and the provincial Ministry involved;
- assessing whether a tissue sample is adequate to permit diagnosis of CWD and notifying the owner, status assessor and accredited veterinarian (if applicable) of samples that are unsuitable for testing;
- **ensuring that for whole head samples received for CWD testing under the VHCP, all identification devices have been verified *in situ*;**
- providing the required sample submission forms; and
- disposing of tissues and carcasses in their possession in accordance with the environmental regulations in force in the province or territory. (Positive carcasses must be disposed of by burial, incineration or approved specified-risk material streams.)

## 1.6 Owners/Cervid Farm Operators

In this VHCP, an owner is an individual, partnership, company, corporation or other legal entity that has legal or rightful title to a cervid or a herd of cervids, regardless of any liens held on the cervid(s). A cervid farm operator is a person who is licensed (where applicable) under the relevant domestic cervid farm regulations (where applicable) to operate a domestic cervid farm; this person may or may not be the owner. Owners/cervid farm operators are persons who have responsibility for the daily care and handling of all cervids on a premises. Owners/cervid farm operators can apply for herd enrolment under the VHCP. Individuals who own or lease cervids but do not have responsibility for **all** cervids on the premises cannot apply for herd enrolment under the VHCP.

Owners/cervid farm operators are responsible for:

- submitting a site plan with the initial application, or within the first assessment year. The site plan will identify all structures and grazing areas on a premises to which the farmed cervids are given access, and that are used to store feed for cervids. The location of water sources, proximity to other farmed cervid herds and location of fences must also be included;

- procuring the services of an accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian, or trained and qualified provincial/territorial VHCP staff, with or without approved third parties (as in *1.4 Program Delivery*) to deliver the VHCP;
- identifying each cervid in the herd with at least two unique identification devices, one of which is an official device, and one of which can be read from a distance, before each cervid reaches the age of 12 months;
- maintaining fences that meet any applicable (federal, provincial/territorial) standards in a manner to prevent intrusion (ingress) or escape (egress) of cervids. See section *4.4.2*;
- providing the necessary facilities and assisting the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian or provincial/territorial VHCP staff with inspection and handling of cervids for inventories and annual inspections;
- reporting quarterly, to the status assessor and the appropriate provincial/territorial Ministry, the death of any cervid(s) 12 months of age and older;
- submitting the appropriate tissue samples (head) for laboratory analysis, or presenting the head for sampling to a certified CWD sample collector, with the appropriate identification maintained *in situ*.
- ensuring that good-quality tissue samples are collected and submitted. The head or the sample should be chilled or frozen immediately (see section *4.2.5*);
- reporting immediately to the CFIA district veterinarian any cervid suspected of being clinically affected by CWD;
- reporting to the status assessor and the appropriate provincial/territorial Ministry, any cervids that have escaped, disappear or are otherwise missing from the premises as per the protocol outlined in the SOP;
- reporting immediately, or with reasonable promptness, to the status assessor and the appropriate provincial Ministry, the entry of any wild cervids into the premises;
- obtaining, maintaining and compiling all relevant documentation of cervid acquisitions, births, and departures (keeping records as per section *3.11*);
- agreeing, with reasonable notice, to make the cervids and records available so that the accredited veterinarian, the provincial/territorial regulatory agency, the regional administrator/status assessor and/or the CFIA can inspect them;
- storing feed in a manner that it is not accessible to wild cervids. See section *4.4.3*;
- sourcing water in a manner that it is not accessible to wild cervids. See section *4.4.4*;
- not accepting onto the premises carcasses or parts from wild cervids, or farmed cervids with lower or no status under a VHCP, for processing or taxidermy. See section *4.4.5*;
- ensuring that every third-party vehicle that transports farmed cervids, and every farm vehicle that is used to transport farmed cervids from other premises, is cleaned and/or disinfected (see definition) before loading cervids. See section *4.4.6*;
- if stocking a new herd on a new premises for the purpose of retaining a higher status, determining whether cervids have been contained on the premises in the

past, and if so, determining if they were on the VHCP, and at what level. See section 2.1.

Any changes to the operation/premises, including the accredited veterinarian, must be reported to the regional administrator and/or status assessor. Documentation must be included in the owner/cervid farm operator's registration file.

## **2. Administration**

### **2.1 Enrolment Procedure**

The owner/cervid farm operator contacts the CFIA district veterinarian to determine the organization responsible for the VHCP in the region in which the herd is located.

The owner/cervid farm operator contacts the VHCP regional administrator and requests an application package.

An application package is completed and submitted to the organization responsible for status assessment. The application must be accompanied by the following:

1. a site plan (see paragraph 4.4 *Biosecurity*) of all structures and grazing areas to which cervids are given access and that are used to store feed, as well as water sources, proximity to other farmed cervid herds and location of fences;
2. the initial herd inventory, prepared by the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian or approved third party, within the three-month period immediately prior to acceptance of the application; and
3. a record-keeping system (objective: records must be reviewed completely and effectively at each annual inspection).

The status assessor reviews the application and assigns an anniversary date and a herd level upon official acceptance to the VHCP. The anniversary quarter, for subsequent years, is the three month period immediately following the anniversary date.

Accelerated admission up to level C of the VHCP may be possible for herds that have met **all** current VHCP requirements for one or more years prior to application. Documentation demonstrating that the current VHCP requirements were being met for that period of time must be provided. Advancement would only be for the number of years all VHCP requirements were being met, and documented, and only for a maximum of three years (level C).

When requested by an owner/cervid farm operator, and at the discretion of the status assessor, an anniversary date may be changed if there is a legitimate reason and it doesn't provide an unfair advantage to the owner/cervid farm operator. This may be accomplished by advancing the date to the end of the quarter each year until the desired quarter is reached.



A herd being established on a premises where a CWD-positive herd has been subject to the CFIA CWD Disease Control Program may only be admitted to the VHCP at level E, provided that all disease control actions (depopulation, cleaning and disinfection) have been completed, and any existing declarations of infected place and quarantines have been removed.

A herd that has been quarantined under the CFIA CWD Disease Control Program, as a result of a trace-out(s) from a CWD positive herd, will be re-instated at the level it held prior to suspension, provided that all disease control actions have been completed, the trace-out(s) was negative for CWD and any existing quarantines have been removed.

An owner/cervid farm operator who will be starting a new herd with acquired cervids of level D or higher and who intends to keep that status, will need to follow all regular application form protocols as above. In addition, the owner/cervid farm operator must provide a letter stating that the premises where the herd will reside meets **one** of the following conditions:

- the premises has not contained cervids; or
- it is unknown whether the premises contained cervids; or
- the premises has contained cervids in the past; in which case, the owner/cervid farm operator must indicate whether or not the previous cervids were enrolled on the VHCP, and if so, at what level.

If it is unknown whether cervids were on the premises previously, or if the cervids were not enrolled on the VHCP, the new herd must start at level E.

If there were no cervids on the premises previously, or the previous cervids on the premises were enrolled on the VHCP, then the new herd may start at the lowest certification level of the cervids being stocked on the premises (following a risk assessment by the status assessor based on the VHCP compliance of the previous cervids).

## **2.2 Advancement or Changes to Status**

The VHCP includes six levels, from the entry level (level E) to the highest level (certified). A minimum of five years (one year each at level E, D, C, B, A) is necessary for an enrolled herd to reach the certified level. Once a herd has reached the certified level, it maintains this level provided that the applicable requirements continue to be met.

The certification status of the herd may be upgraded annually (or maintained at the certified level) if the following conditions are met:

- the premises is not currently subject to any actions related to a CWD disease control program; and
- the herd has met the requirements applicable to its current certification level.

The owner/cervid farm operator must submit an annual report, as per section 4.1.3. All supporting documentation must be submitted to the status assessor for review and approval.

The completed annual report must be signed by the owner/cervid farm operator and the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff. Specific criteria for advancement can be found in *4 Specific Criteria for Program Pillars*.

Failure to submit an annual report at any level within the anniversary quarter (within 15 months of last year's anniversary date) will result in suspension from the VHCP following an investigation/review by the status assessor as follows. If the delay in submission was due to circumstances beyond an owner's/cervid farm operator's control (i.e. emergency, serious illness or death in the family, etc.), the status assessor may, at his or her discretion, grant an extension and has one week to decide whether to grant said extension. If an extension is granted, it should be limited to no more than two weeks from the original deadline, after which the suspension will take effect.

For all levels, the status assessor reviews the annual report and approves advancement (or continuation at the certified level), or identifies deficiencies that prevent advancement.

When deficiencies are identified, the status assessor may require that the current level be maintained until the deficiencies are addressed. This decision is at the discretion of the status assessor. However, this should be no longer than one year, after which the status of the herd will be suspended, downgraded or revoked.

Criteria for decision-making are to be included in the regional administrator's SOP. Once a decision is made, it is documented to the owner/cervid farm operator and copied to the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff and the regional administrator.

## **2.3 Suspension/Revocation/Appeals**

### **Suspension**

All suspensions are intended to be temporary measures. While a herd is suspended, it remains enrolled but has no officially recognized level (E, D, C, B, A or certified) of risk mitigation for CWD on the VHCP; thus, the status is considered "suspended". As in paragraph 2.4 *Reporting*, a suspended herd may be published with the indication of their suspended status OR they may be removed entirely from the published list of herds with a VHCP status until the suspension is resolved. After investigating the situation that led to the suspension, the status assessor must decide on an outcome of the suspension. The three possible outcomes of a suspension are: 1) reinstate at the level it held prior to suspension, 2) downgrade to a lower level, or 3) revoke the herd's enrolment on the VHCP.

When a herd enrolled in the VHCP has its status suspended, VHCP status certificates will not be issued until the suspension is lifted and the herd is reinstated in the program. Status certificates will not be issued during the period of suspension and cervids from the suspended herd will not be eligible for any programs or certificates for which a recognized VHCP status is required. The sale or transfer of a cervid from a suspended herd to another person on the VHCP would have a detrimental effect on the operation (and VHCP status) of the purchasing herd. Any movements are always subject to provincial and territorial regulations where applicable.

Reasons for suspension include the following:

- The owner/cervid farm operator does not submit the annual report including inventory within the anniversary quarter (within 15 months of last year's anniversary date);
- The herd has failed to meet the testing criteria or any other criteria for advancement (and none of the exemptions apply);
- Suspicion of CWD including being subject to a CWD investigation under any CWD disease control program;
- Any contravention of the VHCP requirements.

Suspended herds must be investigated in a timely manner by the status assessor to determine why the owner's/cervid farm operator's submitted documentation indicates a lack of compliance with the VHCP. The investigation should include a discussion with the owner/cervid farm operator to determine the reason for the non-compliance, to ensure that the requirements of the VHCP are well understood, and to take steps to help the owner/cervid farm operator comply. Where it has been determined that the herd will not be able to comply with the VHCP requirements in the near future, the status assessor revokes the enrolment.

An owner/cervid farm operator whose herd is under review for possible revocation from the VHCP will be given the opportunity to submit any relevant information to the status assessor, provided that this is done no later than 30 days after suspension. The status assessor will notify the owner/cervid farm operator (and the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff) in writing of the reasons for the suspension and give the owner/cervid farm operator the opportunity to appeal within the following 60 days. The notice will include the name and address of the lead person responsible for the appeals review committee, as established by the status assessor.

A herd may only remain suspended for a period of up to one year. After this time, the enrolment of the herd in the VHCP is revoked. Herds that are suspended due to an investigation under a CWD disease control program are exempt from this provision.

If a herd is suspected of being infected with CWD at any time during its enrolment, the herd will automatically be suspended and investigated under any applicable CWD disease control program. Once the investigation is complete, CFIA will inform the status assessor of the finding and the herd's risk. The status assessor will use this information to determine the outcome of the suspension (reinstate, downgrade or revoke). If it is

determined via epidemiological investigation that the VHCP herd did not co-mingle with the CWD-positive cervid, then the herd will be re-instated at the level it held prior to the suspension, and the time spent in suspended status will count towards advancement for the next year (provided all VHCP requirements were met during the suspension period).

### **Revocation**

In addition to the previously described reasons where revocation could be an outcome of suspension, if a participating herd is found to be infected with, or a source of CWD, its certification status will be revoked. The herd may be subject to any applicable CWD disease control program. Once all components of the applicable CWD disease control program are completed and any quarantine is removed, the herd may re-enter the VHCP beginning at level E.

Enrolment must be revoked for herds that have been suspended for a period of one year, excluding herds that have been suspended because of an investigation under a CWD disease control program. Re-entry to the VHCP at a later date may be considered at the discretion of the status assessor; however, all herds re-enrolling after revocation must do so beginning at level E.

An owner/cervid farm operator whose herd has been removed from the VHCP due to contravention of VHCP requirements may submit a new application after meeting the conditions stipulated in the VHCP. In such a case, the owner/cervid farm operator must submit satisfactory proof to the status assessor that steps have been taken to ensure that the herd will meet the VHCP requirements in the future. In the case of a herd that is re-enrolled in the VHCP, the re-enrolment level will depend on the reasons for revocation and submitted documentation. The herd will not be automatically re-enrolled at its previous level, and conditions may be imposed by the status assessor during the re-enrolment and in the first year after revocation. In cases where the herd was removed for reasons of information falsification, failure to report to a CFIA veterinary inspector that a cervid might have CWD, or any other action that might expose other cervids to CWD, an owner/cervid farm operator may lose the privilege of registering in the VHCP.

### **Appeals/Review eligibility**

An owner/cervid farm operator may appeal a decision regarding advancement or downgrading in the event of an incomplete or unsatisfactory submission of the annual report, which includes appealing a decision by the status assessor not to accept an exemption, or sacrifice(s), for missed sample(s). An owner/cervid farm operator may also appeal a suspension or a revocation of registration, but not both. Furthermore, an owner/cervid farm operator may appeal a decision made by the status assessor regarding conditions imposed before the herd is allowed to participate in the VHCP after a suspension or revocation.

## **Appeals/Review process**

The regional administrator must design an appeals/review process. At the request of the owner/cervid farm operator, the status assessor will implement the appeals/review process to consider the submitted appeals. The appeals/review committee will provide the status assessor with a recommendation as to whether the appeal should be accepted. A representative of the status assessor will be the non-voting chairperson of the committee. A representative of the appropriate cervid organization may assist the committee to provide information related to the cervid industry. In order to ensure consistency in the appeals process between regional programs and provide clarification on the national standards, it is required that a representative of the CFIA observe the appeal as a non-voting member of the committee.

The individuals appointed must each represent one or more of the following groups:

- an employee of the provincial/territorial veterinary authority;
- a representative of the provincial/territorial veterinary licencing association;
- a professional employee of a college or university who is familiar with the cervid industry;
- a producer representative of the small ruminant industry and currently enrolled in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP); or
- a representative of the status assessor from another Canadian regional VHCP.

The request for appeal must be made in writing by the owner/cervid farm operator to the status assessor, and set out the reasons why the appeal should be considered.

The committee may consider appeals in written form or via teleconference, and need not meet in person. All references to an owner's/cervid farm operator's personal information are to be removed/hidden from the appeals review documents sent to the committee representatives. An owner/cervid farm operator has the option of being present on a teleconference to present material.

After review and consideration of the appeal/review committee's recommendations, the status assessor makes the final decision regarding the appeal. Where the status assessor believes the recommendation of the appeals review committee would jeopardize the integrity of the VHCP, the status assessor may convene a further committee consisting of the CFIA Veterinary Program Specialist responsible for CWD or a delegate, and two provincial/territorial government veterinarians from provinces/territories where the government is responsible for the VHCP. A representative of the national cervid organization will be an ex-officio (non-voting) member of the committee. Following consultation with these additional individuals, the status assessor makes the final decision regarding the appeal. The decision and associated rationale are documented by the status assessor and placed in the associated herd's file.

## **2.4 Reporting**

Information sharing requires that all herd information relevant to CWD or the population of the herd—including registrations, suspensions, revocations, changes in status, inventories, test results, movement permits, deaths, or sales—be available to the owner/cervid farm operator, the appropriate provincial/territorial department or agency, the regional administrator, the status assessor, the accredited veterinarian and the CFIA.

The regional administrator will maintain a list of all herds enrolled in the VHCP, along with their current level, on their website (or on CFIA's website, should the organization not have this capability). The owner/cervid farm operator must agree to allow publication of the herd status under the VHCP at all times. Herds that have been suspended for any reason may be published with the indication of their suspended status OR they may be removed entirely from the published list of herds with a VHCP status until the suspension has been resolved, as determined by the policy set in the regional administrator's SOP.

The quarterly report published by the CFIA will be produced and automatically distributed to all provinces/territories, and/or published on the website. It will list and/or provide links to all registered and certified herds, along with current certification levels.

## **2.5 Review of the VHCP**

The VHCP will be reviewed, at a minimum, on an annual basis, or sooner as scientific information becomes available and changes are required. Along with the national administrator, the review panel will include all available regional administrators, status assessors and two industry representatives and, ideally, will occur in the winter (between January 2 and March 31).

## **3. General Rules**

All regional voluntary herd certification programs must meet the following:

### **3.1**

In order for a regional VHCP to be eligible for recognition, it must meet or exceed the requirements of the national standards, and the regional administrator's and status assessor's SOP must be approved by the national administrator. The SOPs and implementation of the administration of the regional VHCP is subject to CFIA audits at random time intervals.

In provinces/territories in which a provincial/territorial authority or agency is responsible for VHCP delivery, adequate training of staff must be undertaken, and this training may be audited by CFIA.

### **3.2**

The regional VHCP must be open to any owner/cervid farm operator of a premises on which cervids are kept, provided that the owner/cervid farm operator and the premises meet the regional VHCP requirements, that the owner/cervid farm operator of the premises holds a valid cervid farm licence (where applicable), and that the right to participate in the regional VHCP has not been revoked.

### **3.3**

All cervids on a premises must be included in the herd enrolled in the regional VHCP, ownership notwithstanding.

### **3.4**

The agreement between the regional administrator and the owner/cervid farm operator must be signed, and the premises must meet the requirements of the regional VHCP. The herd owner/cervid farm operator must arrange for the services of an accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff to deliver the VHCP, and acceptance of their role in delivery of the VHCP within the enrolled herd is reflected by their signature on the application form. The agreement must include a statement protecting the CFIA from any liability arising from the regional VHCP.

### **3.5**

Multiple premises must be listed under the same certification contract if the premises belong to the same owner and are located contiguous to each other. The premises must collectively meet all of the regional VHCP requirements. Nevertheless, compliance with the VHCP requirements does not negate the requirement to comply with other federal or provincial programs associated with cervids.

### **3.6**

Multiple non-contiguous premises may be permitted to be listed under the same certification contract if the premises belong to the same owner/cervid farm operator. The lands and the equipment must be under the same management system and may use the same equipment. The groups of animals are of the same status and will be considered as one herd for the VHCP. Whatever happens to one premises will happen to the other and the premises will hold the status of the lowest premises.

### **3.7**

Facilities must be suitable for the safe handling of cervids and, as necessary, for the examination of all cervid identification devices (including CFIA Health of Animals tags, if applicable). Fences must be constructed and adequately maintained to prevent the escape or intrusion of cervids and must meet any provincial/territorial standards and any additional standards as may be stated in this document. All harvested and purchased feed must be stored in a manner that renders it inaccessible to wild cervids.

### **3.8**

The owner/cervid farm operator must report to their accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff any illness in a cervid 12 months of age

and older lasting longer than two weeks, except a physical injury. The accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff will be responsible for monitoring the outcome of the case and for reporting the case to the CFIA if CWD is a possible diagnosis.

### **3.9**

Before they reach 12 months of age, all cervids must be identified by two unique identification devices, one of which must be an official tag. Where both national and provincial/territorial official identification requirements exist, the identification of the cervids must comply with both requirements. All cervids must be similarly tagged if moved off the premises, or if a change in ownership occurs.

### **3.10**

Cervids less than 12 months of age must be identified in a manner that enables the owner/cervid farm operator to track these cervids in the herd inventory. They must be appropriately identified (where required by regulation) when a change in ownership occurs or when the cervids are moved outside their usual location (e.g. insemination centre, sales barn or auction barn).

### **3.11**

The owner/cervid farm operator must keep detailed records of every cervid that is born on or enters the premises, no matter who the owner is or who is responsible for the cervid. The records must be kept for a period of five years after the cervid has left the herd or has died. They must be made available to the status assessor, the accredited veterinarian, program delivery personnel or the CFIA inspector at any reasonable time, and must be presented at the time of each annual inspection or inventory.

For all cervids in the herd, the basic data that must be maintained in records **and included as part of the annual report** includes the following:

- the cervid's species;
- the cervid's identification tag/device number(s);
- the cervid's sex;
- the date the cervid entered the herd (day if available, month and year);
- the cervid's date of birth (day, month, year);
- the source of the cervid (homegrown, purchased, loaned);
- any cervid movement permits;
- if the cervid was not born in the herd, the name and address of the person from whom it was obtained; a copy of **the proof of herd status** issued for the herd of origin; and the day, month, and year it was issued;
- the date the cervid left the herd; the premises to which the cervid was moved; and the name, address, and telephone number of the person to whom the cervid was sold (new owners/cervid farm operators are required to keep bills of sale);
- the reason for the cervid leaving and appropriate documentation (a shipping invoice if shipped, a receipt if sold, a date of death/test result); and



- CWD testing results for all cervids 12 months of age and older that die (including slaughter, as per section 4.2.1) or are destroyed for any reason.

### 3.12

If an owner's/cervid farm operator's farm also has non-ruminants on site, measures must be taken to prevent access of farmed cervids to prohibited feed. Where required, copies of all invoices must be kept for an animal food that contains prohibited material (section 171 of the *Health of Animals Regulations*).

## 4. Specific Criteria for Program Pillars

### 4.1 Inventories, Inspections and Annual Reports

#### Inventories

##### 4.1.1

Physical inventories are to be conducted by the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian or an approved third party (see *1.4 Program Delivery*). The inventory will identify all cervids on the premises. During the physical inventory, all live cervids 12 months of age and older in the herd (and any stored dead cervid heads/samples) must be individually inspected and **all** identification devices, including any official devices, must be recorded. The accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian must check for any clinical symptoms of CWD in cervids identified as showing signs of ill-health. If identification cannot be made visually, the cervid(s) must be restrained for verification. Cervids under 12 months of age must be counted and recorded on the inventory, but they do not require unique identifiers.

If a herd inspection is performed by a CFIA veterinary inspector for the purposes of the CFIA's tuberculosis or brucellosis testing program, this may replace part, or all, of the inventory.

A reconciliation of the inventory findings is performed by the producer. The reconciliation must be verified by the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian or trained and qualified provincial/territorial staff of the VHCP department and included in the annual report. The reconciliation is made against the previous year's inventory report, which is supplied by the regional administrator at least one month prior to the start of the anniversary quarter.

The initial and first-year inventories must be physical inventories. Thereafter, physical inventories are required **at least** every two years. For example, if an owner's/cervid farm operator's herd is scheduled for CFIA tuberculosis and brucellosis testing in a year when it is not due for a VHCP physical inventory, that physical inventory may be used, and the maximum of two years in between physical inventories will reset.

Annual inventories are conducted in the years when physical inventories are not required. An annual inventory may identify the cervids by the use of unique identification devices (such as dangle tags) which are visible at a distance. If for any reason a cervid cannot be identified by viewing the identification device at a distance, the cervid must be identified accurately using another identification device. The annual inventory may be conducted by the owner/cervid farm operator, but the reconciliation of the records must be verified by the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff. A record of this verification must be included in the annual report.

Inventories must be conducted within three months of the anniversary date.

## **Annual Inspection**

### **4.1.2**

Inspections will be conducted annually by an accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian. This role may also be filled by trained and qualified provincial/territorial staff of the VHCP department (eg. game farm inspectors, etc.). This will include visual inspection of the premises, observing the general health of the herd, verifying compliance to all regional VHCP requirements, and verifying reconciliation of the inventory. The inspection of the premises includes an assurance of the integrity of the perimeter fences. This assurance can be an inspection of the perimeter fences by the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian or an approved third party, but it may also come from an attestation by the owner/cervid farm operator (see section 4.4.2). The inventory may be conducted by an approved third party (physical inventory) or the owner/cervid farm operator (annual inventory) (see section 4.1.1).

The inspection is required as part of the annual report. All elements of the inspection are also required in the years when a physical inventory is due. The annual inspection must take place within three months of the anniversary date.

## **Annual reports**

### **4.1.3**

The annual report, which is signed by both the owner/cervid farm operator and the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian or by trained and qualified provincial/territorial staff of the VHCP department, is submitted to the status assessor, and includes the annual inspection report (see section 4.1.2), a reconciliation of the inventories (see also sections 3.11 and 4.1.1), supporting documentation for cervids that have moved on and off the premises (see also section 3.11), necessary laboratory reports (see section 4.2.1), perimeter fences report or attestation (see section 4.4.2), and any other supporting documentation.

A reconciliation of the inventories lists the following:

- identification of each cervid on the premises at the time of the inventory. All cervids of every age must be on the inventory;

- all identification devices placed on each cervid, including the current calf or fawn crop and any cervids that have lost identification devices;
- all cervids that have entered or left the premises (for any reason) since the last inventory;
- the status of the herd of origin for those cervids entering the premises;
- all deaths, including identification tag/device number(s);
- the destination of every cervid that moved off the premises as established by a bill of sale or, if the cervid has not been sold, a signed document showing the destination of the cervid;\* and
- appropriate laboratory results (CWD testing).

\* Official documents produced by provincial/territorial or national identification/traceability programs will be accepted as supporting documentation for cervids that have moved on and off the premises.

The report must be forwarded to the status assessor within three months of the anniversary date.

#### **4.1.4**

In all cases, the owner/cervid farm operator is ultimately responsible for clarifying any inventory or inspection questions or concerns that may arise during the course of the review of the annual report by the status assessor.

## **4.2 CWD Surveillance Testing in Herd**

### **Annual surveillance requirements**

#### **4.2.1**

Testing is the most important Program pillar to estimate the CWD status of the herd.

Owners/cervid farm operators are required to submit samples from 100% of cervids 12 months of age and older that die, are humanely euthanized, or hunted on farm for CWD testing, in order to advance or remain certified. Beginning January 1, 2018, the requirement to submit samples for CWD testing will also include 50% of any cervids on the premises slaughtered at any abattoir (including US abattoirs) or on farm. January 1, 2019 the slaughter requirement for CWD testing will increase to 75%, and January 1, 2020 the slaughter requirement for CWD testing will increase to 100%. The sale of cervids to a hunt farm are similar to any other cervid sales.

If a required sample is missed, an owner/cervid farm operator at levels E–A has the option to sacrifice two other adult (12 months of age and older) cervids from the herd for every sample that is missed in order to meet requirements to advance. An owner/cervid farm operator at the certified level has the option to sacrifice one other adult (12 months of age and older) cervid from the herd for every sample that is missed in order to meet the requirements to maintain certified level. The sacrificed cervids must be a similar cohort to the sample that was missed.

Missed samples that can be neither exempted (as per s.4.2.8) nor replaced by the above sacrifice option may be considered as missed submissions, at the discretion of the status assessor.

#### 4.2.2

The head of the cervid may be submitted directly to a CFIA-approved laboratory by the owner/cervid farm operator; alternatively, a certified CWD sample collector may collect tissue samples for submission to a CFIA-approved laboratory. In all cases, heads or tissue samples should be chilled or frozen immediately upon being found. The owner/cervid farm operator or certified CWD sample collector should contact the laboratory in advance of submitting a head/tissue sample. The head of the cervid must bear all identification *in situ*. All samples must be accompanied by identification.

#### 4.2.3

If the dead cervid is not found immediately, or the certified CWD sample collector or the laboratory are not available within 36 hours of death, the head of the cervid must be frozen and submitted in a timely manner as a frozen specimen. Freezing enables the CWD diagnostic test to be applied to the tissues that otherwise would no longer be suitable for testing.

Cervids 12 months and older which have died or been euthanized and are submitted to a laboratory for routine post-mortem diagnosis must be tested for CWD.

#### 4.2.4

Specimens must meet the requirements specified in the diagnostic protocol approved by the CFIA, which guarantees the reliability and accuracy of the results. If an unsuitable specimen is received (see section 4.2.5), the receiving laboratory is to notify the status assessor, the owner/cervid farm operator and either accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or provincial/territorial VHCP staff responsible for the herd. A follow-up of the details of the individual situation will be undertaken by the status assessor. If negligence on the part of the owner/cervid farm operator is identified as the cause, or this occurrence is repeated, then the VHCP's requirements are considered to have not been met and the herd is to be suspended.

Sacrifices cannot be used to overcome the repeated submission of poor quality samples. If the status assessor determines that there has been negligence on the part of the owner/cervid farm operator, the herd is to be suspended, notwithstanding paragraph 4.2.1.

#### 4.2.5

Good-quality samples and complete collection of the obex and the retropharyngeal lymph nodes (RPLN) from dead cervids are essential for successful surveillance. Owners/cervid farm operators are responsible for ensuring that the tissue samples are of good quality, and that all required samples and identification are submitted. The following are examples of poor-quality, untestable samples:

- the sample/head is severely autolyzed (putrified);

- the wrong portion of the brain was submitted, or something other than the whole brain/obex was submitted;
- the skull/head was submitted, but no testable tissue was present;
- the sample is not testable for other reasons (i.e. no identification, etc.).

When a head is presented to a certified CWD sample collector but there is no brain tissue to sample or no identification, the certified CWD sample collector will provide the owner/cervid farm operator with a letter certifying that the head was submitted but a sample could not be forwarded for testing, with an explanation of why a sample could not be forwarded for testing.

## Specimens submitted and tissues tested

### 4.2.6

The obex and the RPLN must **both** be submitted for all farmed cervids tested for CWD.

The obex of the medulla is the primary target tissue tested for all members of the family Cervidae (with the exception of members of the genus *Odocoileus*), such as elk, red deer, reindeer/caribou, sika deer, fallow deer, moose and any hybrids.

The RPLN is the primary target tissue tested for *Odocoileus* species, including white-tailed deer, black-tailed deer, mule deer and any hybrids.

The additional submitted tissues will be frozen and held by the laboratory until the initial test is completed.

If moribund cervids are humanely destroyed on farm by a gunshot to the head, the recipient lab must sample and test for CWD, both the whole brain and one lymph node from the head (mandibular or retropharyngeal) or, if no lymph node is available, the whole brain and one tonsil.

## Results of analysis on samples submitted

### 4.2.7

The standard test for the VHCP must be the test currently recognized by the CFIA as an appropriate screening test. Currently it is the Bio-Rad ELISA, and reporting must reflect this.

Results of analysis on samples submitted for CWD testing via Bio-Rad ELISA are to be reported as follows:

#### ***Tested: CWD not detected***

Where the specimen submitted contained the correct target tissue for the species being tested, the sample should be reported as follows: "Bio-Rad ELISA was negative for disease specific PrP (PrP<sup>CWD</sup>). Based on the tissue available for testing, this cervid was unlikely to have died from CWD."

***Tested: CWD not detected in secondary target tissue***

Where the specimen submitted did not contain the primary target tissue identified for the species being tested, the sample should be reported as follows: “Bio-Rad ELISA was negative for disease specific PrP (PrP<sup>CWD</sup>). Based on the tissue available for testing, this cervid was unlikely to have died from CWD.”

This may include the following:

- samples from white-tailed deer, black-tailed deer, mule deer and any hybrids where the RPLN was not submitted, but the obex and/or the whole brain is available for testing;
- samples from elk, red deer, fallow deer, Sika deer, reindeer/caribou, moose and any hybrids where the obex was not submitted, but the RPLN or other areas of the brain is available for testing.

***Submitted: Unsuitable for testing***

Where the specimen submitted did not have identifiable whole brain/obex or RPLN tissue available for testing, the sample should be reported as follows: “Submitted: Unsuitable for testing.” This should be followed with an explanation as to the cause for this result, as per section 4.2.5.

**For the purposes of testing under the VHCP, samples being reported as “Tested: CWD not detected” will be considered suitable when the herd is assessed for advancement within the VHCP.**

**Samples being reported as “Tested: CWD not detected in secondary target tissue” will be considered as suitable when a herd is assessed for advancement within the VHCP if it happens only sporadically. If primary tissue is missed repeatedly, a follow-up of the details of the individual situation will be undertaken by the status assessor. If negligence on the part of the owner/cervid farm operator is identified as the cause, or this occurrence is repeated, then the VHCP’s requirements are considered to have not been met and the herd is to be suspended.**

The wording used for reporting of CWD testing results from VHCP samples from all CFIA-approved laboratories will need to be approved prior to the 2017 CWD VHCP National Standards update being published, for continued endorsement from CFIA on reporting for the VHCP. After publication, should any further changes to reporting be requested by CFIA-approved laboratories, they will need to be reviewed by the CFIA Science Branch for approval.

**Exemptions from submission of heads**

**4.2.8**

The status assessor should consider the following as automatic exemptions from the requirement to submit, unless the status assessor suspects that the conditions set out were not met or that the exemption is being abused to the detriment of the VHCP:

- Destruction of cervids (including stored heads/samples) by fire: a certificate or letter from an appropriate official must accompany the annual report.
- The destruction or carrying away of the head of a cervid by a predator: a certificate or letter from an appropriate wildlife officer or other government official responsible for investigating such incidents must accompany the annual report.
- Theft: a report from the police officer who investigates the theft must accompany the annual report.
- Loss or destruction of the head/tissue sample that is no longer in the control of the owner/cervid farm operator (e.g. by an accredited veterinarian, courier or laboratory). Recognized laboratories should note on reception of the specimen that the obex, RPLN or other appropriate tissue samples are not present and the reason why. A letter setting out the details of the loss of the sample by the individual responsible must accompany the annual report.
- Any other reason (such as a flood), over which the owner/cervid farm operator could not reasonably be expected to have control that results in the destruction or disappearance of the head/tissue sample: a letter or report by an acceptable third party that sets out the details of the reason for failure to submit the sample must accompany the annual report. The status assessor may accept a picture (when available) of the cervid's head that clearly shows the identification device(s), preferably still *in situ*.

### 4.3 Enrolled Herd

#### 4.3.1

Introductions of cervids to a herd enrolled in the VHCP may only be made from herds of equivalent or higher status.

#### 4.3.2

Documentation must be provided that enables the status assessor and the owner/cervid farm operator to determine the CWD risk status/VHCP status of the herd of origin at the time of transfer of the animal.

Introduction of cervids from the following sources will have no impact on the certification level:

- from Canadian herds registered in the VHCP at an equivalent or higher certification level (anniversary quarter will be taken into consideration); or
- from a country the CFIA recognizes as being free from CWD; or
- from a herd registered (on the date of export) at an equivalent or higher level in a country/region/zone of origin's CWD Herd Certification Program, that the CFIA has assessed as being equivalent to the VHCP.

### **4.3.3**

If cervids from herds of a lower certification level are introduced, the status of the recipient herd will be downgraded to that of the herd of origin of the lowest level. If cervids from a non-participating herd are introduced, the status of the recipient herd will be reduced to level E.

### **4.3.4**

Co-mingling (even temporarily) with cervids from non-participating cervid herds or herds of a lower VHCP status will result in downgrading of the certification level to that of the lowest level herd (level E if cervids are co-mingled with cervids from a non-participating herd).

### **4.3.5**

There is currently no scientific evidence that germplasm may transmit CWD. As such, semen and embryos may be sourced from cervids in non-participating herds or herds of any certification level, with no impact on the certification level of the recipient herd, provided that, on the date of insemination or embryo transplant, the cervid donor is not CWD positive or a CWD-exposed susceptible cervid.

## **4.4 Biosecurity**

### **Site plan**

#### **4.4.1**

The site plan must have a diagram that identifies all structures and grazing areas on a premises to which cervids are given access, and that are used to store feed for cervids. The location of water sources, proximity to other cervid herds and location of fences must also be included.

A site plan must be submitted with the initial application when establishing a herd. For herds already enrolled on the VHCP, the site plan must be submitted with the next annual report, after the 2017 CWD VHCP National Standards update is published.

### **Fencing**

#### **4.4.2**

Perimeter fencing must be present around the herd. Fences must be maintained in a manner to prevent intrusion (ingress) or escape (egress) of cervids, and must meet any provincial or territorial requirements (if applicable).

As part of the annual inspection, there must be assurance of the integrity of the fences. This assurance can be an inspection of the perimeter fences by the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian or an approved third party. Alternately, the fences can be inspected by the owner/cervid farm operator. When an owner/cervid farm operator attests to the fence integrity they must provide a signed document that they have checked all the



fences within the previous three months and that the fences meet the requirements of the VHCP. The document must be attached to the annual report and include pictures where deemed necessary.

For herds established after the date of this update of the 2017 CWD VHCP National Standards, the fences must be a minimum of 2.4 meters high (8 feet), and must meet any provincial or territorial requirements (where applicable).

## **Feed storage**

### **4.4.3**

All feed must be stored in a manner that renders it is inaccessible to wild cervids. If feed for the VHCP herd is grown on a separate area of the premises, bales must be brought inside fences as soon as possible after baling so that wild cervids do not have an opportunity to feed on, salivate in, and defecate or urinate on or near the feed that is going to be fed to VHCP herds. Bins for concentrates, such as grain, must be secured and stored in a manner that any feed is inaccessible to wild cervids.

In areas of Canada where CWD exists in the wild, owners/cervid farm operators enrolled in the VHCP must take steps that address the highest-risk areas of crop fields that will be used for feed grain. When grain crops in the high-risk areas are swathed, they must be combined as soon as possible to prevent wild cervids from defecating, salivating or urinating on the swaths. This should not be a problem for standing grain crops that are straight combined. Screenings sourced from areas where CWD is known to exist in wild cervids are not to be fed to farmed cervids.

## **Water sourcing**

### **4.4.4**

CWD can potentially be transmitted through contaminated water sources. Standing bodies of water such as ponds, sloughs, dugouts and water troughs which could be used as a source of water for farmed cervids, must be inaccessible to wild cervids. At this time, running water such as streams or spring run-off has not been shown to have infective levels of CWD prion.

## **Taxidermy and carcasses**

### **4.4.5**

Carcasses or parts from wild cervids or farmed cervids with lower or no status under a VHCP are not permitted to be brought on to premises enrolled in the VHCP for processing or taxidermy. Field-dressed carcasses from wild cervids or farmed cervids with lower or no status may be brought onto the facility for personal use only, and only into areas where farmed cervids do not have access. Exemptions may be allowed on premises on which a separate processing facility (slaughter facility, taxidermy facility, etc.) is located, provided that the facility is physically separate, that live farmed cervids on the

premises have no direct or indirect contact with the carcasses or parts, and that waste materials are disposed of in a manner that it is inaccessible to farmed and wild cervids.

## **Transportation vehicles**

### **4.4.6**

Transportation vehicles can be a significant source of both direct and indirect transmission of CWD to farmed cervids as infective prion can be found in feces, urine and saliva of infected cervids. The prion can remain infective in trailers contaminated by feces, urine and saliva left in uncleaned trailers. Mixed loads of farmed cervids of different VHCP status (or no status) can only occur if all the cervids are going directly to slaughter.

Transportation vehicles need to be thoroughly cleaned (power washed or scrubbed with low pressure water, detergent and a brush) of all visible organic material and disinfected (see definition in section 5) in the following situations:

1. When cervids are transported off the premises (to shows, etc.) and returned to the premises, the transportation vehicle must be cleaned and disinfected upon returning to the premises.
2. When the transportation vehicle is used to transport cervids of mixed status (lower and/or no VHCP status) such as shipping directly to slaughter and stopping at various premises to load the cervids. After the shipment is completed the transportation vehicle must be cleaned and disinfected prior to the next time it enters a VHCP premises.

Whenever a vehicle containing cervids of lower or unknown status enters the premises, any organic matter (especially feces and urine) that escapes from the vehicle must be collected and disposed of in a manner that prevents farmed cervids on the premises being exposed to this material.

In all other situations, the transportation vehicle need only be cleaned and washed of all organic material (disinfection is not required). Transportation vehicles should be periodically disinfected as a routine preventive measure. Photos can be used as a record that a transportation vehicle was properly cleaned, and a statement from the individual who disinfected a trailer (when required as above) will be a record of disinfection.

**The following are additional biosecurity measures that can be used in regional VHCPs in areas where CWD is enzootic:**

**Record keeping and administration**

**4.4.7**

Keep visitor logs that record the movement of all people and vehicles onto and off the premises.

Provide personnel training (i.e. a written and verbal on-farm program to educate, train and re-train all workers and family members), ensuring knowledge of all biosecurity principles and compliance with practices used on-farm.

**Minimizing direct (cervid-to-cervid) transmission of CWD**

**4.4.8**

Inspect the perimeter fences at least four times per year (or sooner if a problem is noticed) to ensure that they are intact.

Have other mechanisms in place to deter wild cervids from entering the premises (e.g. provide protection with dogs, keep feeding and watering stations away from perimeter fences, add one strand of electric fence outside the perimeter fences, or install other double-fencing equivalent options).

**Minimizing indirect transmission of CWD**

**4.4.9**

Use all disposable equipment only once (e.g. needles, syringes, gloves).

Clean and disinfect all other non-disposable equipment that comes into contact with bodily fluids (e.g. velveting tools), as per the definition in section 5.

Avoid bringing products or by-products of cervid origin onto the farm (e.g. cervid origin supplements for velvet growth, attractants, baits, tissues or carcasses).

Have dedicated equipment for use only on the enrolled farm (e.g. dedicated clean boots and coveralls for visitors only and separate ones for employees).

Protect feed from contamination by having a rodent-control program in place. (Rodents can ingest and shed prions.)

Bring in feed from reliable sources only.

## 5. Definitions

**Accredited veterinarian:** A veterinarian who is not employed by the federal government, is licensed to practice veterinary medicine in Canada, and is accredited by the CFIA or the appropriate regional administrator's provincial/territorial government (where a provincial/territorial accreditation process exists) to perform inspections, tests and other activities required for program delivery functions of the VHCP.

**Anniversary date:** Date of the official acceptance onto the VHCP. The status assessor reviews the application and assigns an anniversary date and a herd level upon official acceptance to the VHCP, and will use the same selection criteria for all enrolled owners/cervid farm operators in a region.

**Annual inspection:** The annual inspection will be conducted annually by an accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or by trained and qualified provincial/territorial staff of the VHCP department (e.g. game farm inspectors, etc.). An annual inspection will include visual inspection of the premises, observing the general health of the herd, verifying compliance to all regional VHCP requirements, and verifying reconciliation of the inventory. The inspection of the premises includes an assurance of the integrity of the perimeter fences. This assurance can be an inspection of the perimeter fences by the accredited veterinarian or official veterinarian or an approved third party, but it may also come from an attestation by the owner/cervid farm operator (see section 4.4.2).

The inventory portion of the inspection may be conducted by an approved third party (physical inventory) or the owner/cervid farm operator (annual inventory). The inspection is required as part of the annual report. All elements of the inspection are also required in the years when a physical inventory is due.

**Annual inventory:** The annual inventory will identify all cervids on the premises in the years when a physical inventory is not required. An annual inventory may identify the cervids by the use of unique identification devices (such as dangle tags) which are visible at a distance. If for any reason a cervid cannot be identified by viewing the identification device at a distance, the cervid must be identified accurately using another identification device. The annual inventory may be performed by the owner/cervid farm operator, but the reconciliation of records must be verified by the accredited veterinarian, an official veterinarian, or trained and qualified provincial/territorial staff of the VHCP department. Cervids under 12 months of age must be counted and recorded on the inventory, but they do not require unique identifiers.

**Annual report:** The annual report is the responsibility of the owner/cervid farm operator. It is submitted to the status assessor, and includes the annual inspection report (see section 4.1.2), a reconciliation of the inventories (see sections 3.11, 4.1.1, and 4.1.3), supporting documentation for cervids that have moved on and off the premises (see sections 3.11 and 4.1.3), necessary laboratory reports (see section 4.2.1), perimeter fences inspection report or attestation (see section 4.4.2), and any other supporting documentation. The annual report is signed by both the owner/cervid farm operator and

the accredited veterinarian, official veterinarian, or by trained and qualified provincial/territorial staff of the VHCP department (e.g. game farm inspectors, etc.) who verified the report.

**Approved third party:** An individual who is not the owner/cervid farm operator, is at arm's length with the owner/cervid farm operator and is approved by the regional administrator as an eligible Program deliverer, and who is trained and qualified to deliver certain aspects of the VHCP. Approved third parties may include staff of a provincial/territorial department or agency, an animal health technician who is registered under the appropriate provincial licensing body and supervised by an accredited veterinarian, or a CFIA veterinarian or inspector.

**Biosecurity:** The implementation of measures that reduce the risk of the introduction and spread of CWD prion and exposure to wild cervids. The adoption of these measures is designed to reduce this risk in all activities involving farmed and captive exotic cervids and their products.

**Certified CWD Sample Collector:** An individual who has completed appropriate training recognized by his or her regional administrator on the collection and preservation of samples for CWD testing and on proper recordkeeping, and is certified by his or her regional administrator to perform these activities for farmed cervids for the purposes of the VHCP. A certified CWD sample collector may be an approved third party or a cervid farm operator. He/she must operate at arm's length from the owner/cervid farm operator and may not collect samples from his/her own animals. A certified CWD sample collector is responsible for ensuring that, for all cervids presented for sample collection, all identification devices have been verified *in situ*.

**Cervid:** Any member of the Cervidae family including any hybrids considered at risk to CWD including, but not limited to, mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus nelsoni*), red deer (*Cervus elaphus elaphus*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*), fallow deer (*Dama dama*), Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*), Manchurian Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*), reindeer/caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), Muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*), and moose (*Alces alces shirasi*).

**Cervid farm operator:** A person who is licensed (where applicable), under the relevant cervid farm regulations (where applicable) to operate a cervid farm.

**CFIA:** Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which serves as the national administrator for the VHCP.

**CFIA-approved laboratory:** A laboratory that is part of the National TSE Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Network (NTSE-VDLN) and that meets the quality assurance requirements for approved CWD tests.

**Cohort:** A group of cervids with close or similar types of experiences. Animals in the same cohort will be the same age, will have been on the premises for the same length of time, kept in the same enclosures, fed the same feed and accessed the same water supplies. A sacrificed animal should be, as much as possible, from the same cohort as the missed-sample animal.

**Co-mingled cervids:** Cervids are considered co-mingled if they have physical contact with each other, including through fences or pen separations, as well as indirect contact such as shared equipment, pasture, or the same water source. Co-mingling also includes sharing the same section in a transportation unit where physical contact can occur. Cervids having had contact with a CWD-positive cervid or CWD-positive premises within the last 60 months are also considered to have co-mingled.

**Contiguous :** Premises which share common boundaries and where co-mingling of farmed cervids can occur between the two premises.

**CFIA CWD Disease Control Program:** The program or policy developed for the control and eradication of CWD in farmed cervids and in cervids maintained in zoos and collections, and which is governed by the *Health of Animals Act* and the *Health of Animals Regulations*.

**CWD-exposed susceptible (suspect) cervid:** Any cervid that has resided on CWD-positive premises, is a part of a CWD-positive herd, has been diagnosed by a competent authority (i.e. CFIA), or has been exposed to a CWD-positive cervid, within the last 60 months.

**CWD-positive cervid:** A cervid for which official CWD-positive results were reported by the CFIA's National and OIE Reference Laboratory for CWD, using at least two CFIA-approved CWD tests (e.g. ELISA, immunohistochemistry, Western blot) applied to the brain and/or lymphoid tissue as per section 4.2.6.

**CWD-positive herd:** A farmed cervid herd in which one or more cervids has been confirmed as CWD positive.

**CWD-suspect herd:** For the purposes of the VHCP, a cervid herd is classified as a CWD-suspect herd when the herd has co-mingled with a CWD-exposed susceptible cervid.

**CWD VHCP:** Chronic Wasting Disease Voluntary Herd Certification Program, a voluntary program established and maintained to reduce the occurrence and spread of CWD in a herd, and to identify herds that have been free of evidence of CWD over specific time periods.

**Dead cervid:** A cervid that has died naturally, been slaughtered on an emergency basis, or been condemned at an abattoir.

**Disinfection:** Involves the procedures used to inactivate the CWD prion following the thorough removal of all organic material, cleaning and washing with hot water and

detergent. After the surface is dry, a 2% available chlorine solution (sodium hypochlorite) is applied using low pressure, and allowed to remain on the surface for one hour, followed by a thorough rinse with water. The solution is composed of two parts water mixed with one part commercially available household bleach (such as Clorox), which has a concentration of sodium hypochlorite of approximately 6%. The use of rubber gloves and safety goggles or a full face shield is recommended.

**Endemic:** The constant presence of a disease in a population. Often used interchangeably with “enzootic”.

**Enrolled Herd:** A cervid herd enrolled in the CWD VHCP and that must remain closed to the introduction of cervids not enrolled in the VHCP. Introductions may only be made from herds of equal or higher status to maintain their herd level.

**Enzootic:** Present or usually prevalent in a population or geographical area at all times, in contrast to “epizootic”.

**Epizootic:** Normally absent in a population, but temporarily causing a widespread outbreak.

**Herd:** One or more cervids that are under common ownership or supervision and are raised on any single premises or on two or more premises that are geographically separated (i.e. by road, stream, etc.), but on which cervids have direct or indirect contact with each other through handling or co-mingling.

**Herd status:** The level of participation achieved and officially recognized by the status assessor and the CFIA in the CWD VHCP.

**Herd status certificate:** Document issued by the regional administrator, specifying the location and status of the herd, and indicating the date of issue.

**Non-contiguous:** Premises which are separated by a buffer zone and do not share common boundaries. Co-mingling of any kind (direct or indirect), of cervids, cannot occur between the two premises.

**Non-negative sample:** Any CWD sample tested using Bio-Rad ELISA or immunohistochemistry in a CFIA-approved laboratory where a negative test result is not obtained. These samples are then forwarded to CFIA’s National and OIE Reference Laboratory for CWD for confirmatory testing.

**Obex:** The specific area of the brain required for testing using Bio-Rad ELISA or immunohistochemistry for the earliest detection of CWD in all cervids, with the exception of members of the Cervidae family of the genus *Odocoileus* including mule deer, white-tailed deer, and their hybrids.

**Official identification device:** A provincial/territorial government-approved identification device (where applicable), a CFIA official identification device, or an approved method of identification from a national cervid traceability program.

**Official veterinarian:** A veterinarian employed within a provincial/territorial department responsible for the administration of the regional VHCP.

**Owner:** An individual, partnership, company, corporation or other legal entity that has legal or rightful title to a cervid or a herd of cervids, regardless of any liens held on the cervid(s).

**Physical inventory:** Physical inventories are conducted at least every two years, and are conducted by the accredited veterinarian, an official veterinarian or an approved third party (as per section 1.4). The physical inventory will identify **all** cervids on the premises. During the physical inventory, all live cervids 12 months of age and older (and any stored dead cervid heads/samples) must be individually inspected and all identification devices, including any official devices, must be recorded. Any cervids showing signs of ill-health must be examined by the veterinarian for clinical symptoms of CWD. If identification cannot be verified visually, the cervid(s) must be restrained for verification. Cervids under 12 months of age must be counted and recorded on the inventory, but they do not require unique identifiers. The physical inventory findings are reconciled in the herd's inventory records.

If a herd inspection is performed by a CFIA veterinary inspector for the purposes of the CFIA's tuberculosis or brucellosis testing program, this may replace part, or all, of the inventory by the accredited veterinarian.

**Premises:** For the purposes of the VHCP, the ground, area, buildings and equipment occupied by, or used for, a farmed cervid herd, and enclosed by perimeter fencing.

**Prohibited materials:** Means prohibited feed material, and includes anything that is, or that contains, any protein that originated from a mammal other than: a porcine or equine; milk or products of milk; gelatin derived exclusively from hides or skins or products of gelatin derived exclusively from hides or skins; blood or products of blood; rendered fats derived from ruminants, that contain no more than 0.15% insoluble impurities or their products. Previously prohibited material that has been treated in a manner approved by the Minister to inactivate the agents that cause transmissible spongiform encephalopathies is no longer prohibited material.

**Retropharyngeal lymph node (RPLN):** A lymph node of the head that can be used for the earliest detection of CWD in members of the Cervidae family of the genus *Odocoileus* including mule deer, white-tailed deer, and their hybrids.

**Slaughter:** Cervids slaughtered on-farm, or slaughtered at a provincial/territorial or federally inspected abattoir. Farmed cervids slaughtered on an emergency basis require sampling.



**Suspended herd:** A suspended herd retains its membership in the VHCP, but has no recognized status by the CFIA or the status assessor during the suspension, including for the purposes of export or domestic trade with other herds participating in the VHCP.

**Suspension:** The removal of the risk-mitigation status of a herd under the VHCP. While a herd is suspended, it remains enrolled, but has no officially recognized level (E, D, C, B, A or certified). All suspensions are intended to be temporary measures.