



Fast Facts About Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease

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Q: What is adenovirus hemorrhagic disease (AHD)?

A: Adenoviruses belong to a small group of viruses that can infect a variety of animals, both wild and domestic. AHD in deer was first identified in California in 1994.

Q: What are signs that a deer has AHD?

A: Infected deer have symptoms that include rapid or open mouth breathing, foaming or drooling at the mouth, diarrhea (possibly bloody), weakness, and ulcers and abscesses in the mouth and throat.

Q: Do all deer that get the virus die?

A: Estimates from the California outbreak indicate mortality of infected fawns generally was very high, with lower adult mortality. During the 2002 Oregon outbreak, deer of all age and sex classes died in roughly the same proportions they occurred in the population. Research is under way in Oregon to determine how many deer in the population were exposed to AHD but survived.

Q: How does the disease spread?

A: Transmission is by direct contact between deer, contact with bodily fluids, and possibly airborne routes. The time between exposure to the virus and showing signs of illness or death is commonly less than one week. High-density deer populations could have a higher risk for the disease due to the ease of transmission. For this reason, ODFW encourages people to avoid providing feed or water stations for deer because it may help spread the disease if it is present in the population.

Q: Is AHD expected to spread throughout Oregon's deer herds?

A: The Oregon State University Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in 2001 confirmed the presence of AHD in one adult black-tailed deer doe from southwestern Oregon. Biologists suspect the deaths of several dozen other deer from the same area also may have been caused by AHD. Between May and August 2002 biologists estimate more than 400 deer died from the virus in the Crooked River Ranch area of Central Oregon and near the town of Sisters, Oregon.

Q: Is there a cure?

A: No. Monitoring, proper carcass disposal and not moving infected live deer are methods that can help minimize movement of the disease to new areas, but there is no cure.

Q: Can AHD be transmitted to humans?

A: There are no known cases of humans getting sick from AHD. However, if a person lives or hunts in an infected area, it's a good idea to wear rubber gloves when handling carcasses. People who may be sick for any reason or who have a compromised immune system also should take special precautions around deer carcasses. There also are no known health risks of eating meat from a deer infected with AHD, but experts recommend thoroughly cooking the meat from animals harvested in an area where the infection is present.

Q: If a major AHD outbreak occurs, will it affect deer hunting opportunities?

A: It could. If enough deer die to significantly reduce populations in a unit, hunter success may be low in that unit during the year of the die-off. If subsequent herd inventories indicate reduced populations, low fawn recruitment or low buck ratios, future tag numbers could be reduced until the herd recovers.