December 2017

Veterinary Services Staff

Branch Supervisor/Wildlife Veterinarian: Dr. Mary Wood

Laboratory Supervisor: Hank Edwards

Senior Lab Scientist: Jessica Jennings-Gaines

Brucellosis Lab Assistant: Kylie Sinclair

Wildlife Disease Specialist: Terry Creekmore

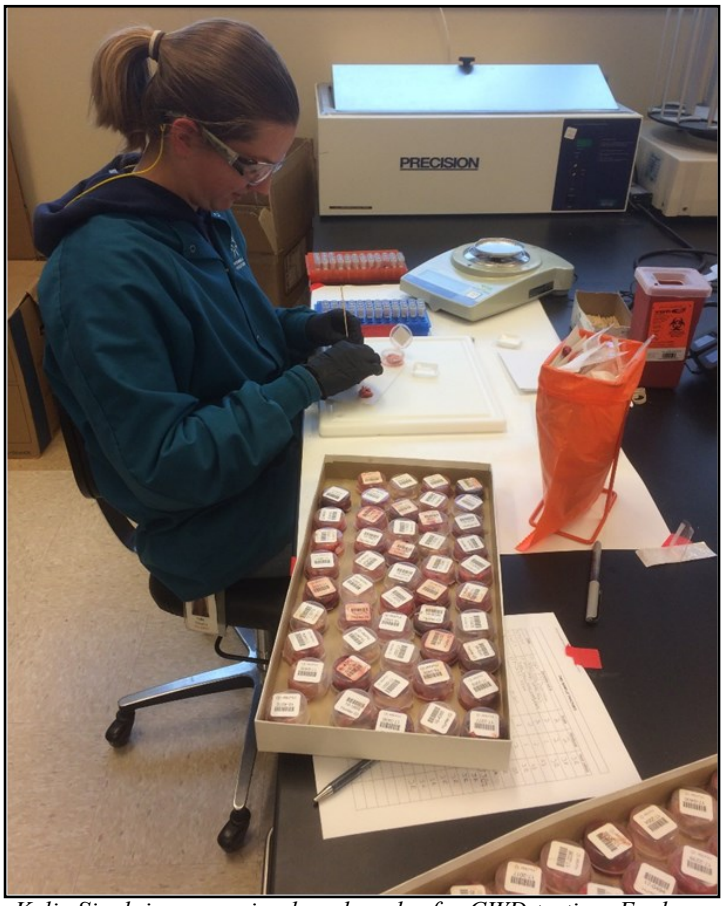
TWRC Manager: Matt Huizenga

Wildlife Biologist: Cole Hansen

Biologist: Sam Lockwood

Wildlife Health Laboratory

Brucellosis Surveillance: Blood samples also continue to trickle into the laboratory, with 1,212 samples received during the 2017 hunting season. Twenty-six positives have been detected thus far – all of which have occurred outside the Bighorns and within the Designated Surveillance Area (DSA). As elk hunting seasons progress, we are expecting another 100 to 300 additional samples before the end of January.



Kylie Sinclair processing lymph nodes for CWD testing. Each sample must be weighed to 300 mg before being homogenized and tested.

CWD Surveillance: CWD surveillance continues for the 2017 hunting season. Nearly 1,000 samples were tested in November, and a total of 3,171 samples have been tested since the beginning of September. Four new deer hunt areas have been identified in 2017 (19, 52, 118 and 139), as well as one new elk hunt area (48). To date, we have diagnosed 289 positives, representing 225 mule deer, 39 white-tailed deer, and 25 elk. We are currently on track to exceed our 2016 surveillance numbers. Many thanks to all of the WGFD field personnel who have made CWD surveillance a priority this year.

Other Happenings: The vacant Senior Laboratory Scientist position advertisement closed at the end of November, with 62 applicants. Applications will be reviewed in early December and interviews are scheduled for the second week in January.

Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center (TWRC)

Meetings, Training, and Getting Ready for Winter

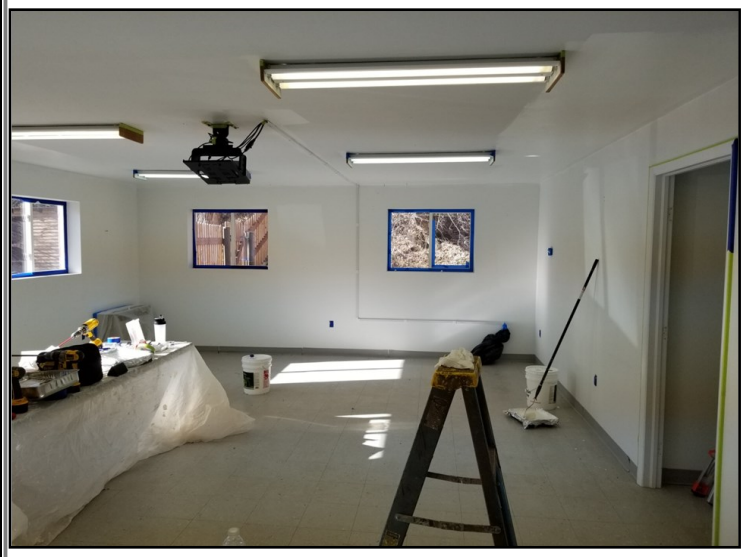
This month was fairly busy with trainings and meetings. TWRC personnel attended the Regional Leadership Team meeting in Torrington, Flight Safety Training in Laramie, our biannual Animal Care & Use Committee meeting at the TWRC, and finished with a branch meeting in Laramie.

We also spent time cleaning and preparing the facility for winter. A couple days were spent servicing and winterizing equipment and vehicles, then we repaired and upgraded the overhead netting on our sheep pens before the winter snows. Prepping for winter also included borrowing Habitat and Access's grizzly to clear rocks out of our corrals so we can use our snow blower to clear drifts without damaging it.

Clearing rocks out of the corrals

Conference Room Upgrades

We finished off the month by preparing for new updates to our conference and storage rooms. We use our conference room for department training, public meetings, and as the local polling station. The old flooring was beginning to crumble and become hazardous so we budgeted for new flooring later this month. Before the new floor goes in, we cleaned everything up, moved all the furniture and appliances, and put a fresh coat of paint on the walls and ceilings. The whole branch came up to help out with painting and we were able to get everything ready for the new floor in record time.



Conference room before painting

Conference room after painting

Wildlife Necropsy Summary

Five diagnostic cases were submitted for necropsy during November. Six additional cases are pending.

Species	Date Received	County	Diagnosis
Mule deer	11/9/2017	Carbon	Undetermined
White-tailed deer	11/17/2017	Fremont	Hydatid cysts
Bighorn sheep	11/17/2017	Natrona	Sinus tumor

Disease of the Month

Disease of the Month: **Red Nose Syndrome in Reindeer**

Many people have heard of the deadly fungus spreading through bat populations causing the disease known as White-Nose Syndrome. This month we thought we would share some information about a much rarer condition specific to reindeer known as Red Nose Syndrome.

Red Nose Syndrome (RNS) of reindeer is characterized by an enlarged and reddened nose, that is often described as "glowing". While the clinical signs of RNS may be alarming, it appears that this particular condition actually provides a benefit to the animal rather than causing disease. Animals with this condition harbor enhanced navigation abilities and can see better through blizzards and the dark. To date, there has only been one reported case of Red Nose Syndrome in a captive reindeer named "Rudolph" residing in the North Pole. Despite significant surveillance efforts, researchers have not identified any additional cases in reindeer or other cervid species (deer, elk, moose). The causative agent of Red Nose Syndrome has yet to be identified. Some experts suggest an underlying genetic cause, while others simply state that RNS is a mystery that cannot be explained by science. Rudolph is actually one of only 9 animals in a unique taxonomic class of reindeer (*R.t. saintnicolas magicalus*). This particular group appears to have the unique characteristic of flight in addition to other more common reindeer characteristics. There is some question on whether RNS may be limited to only this unique group of cervids.

Most Reindeer are actually semi-domesticated animals herded by native Alaskans in the US and the native Sami in Scandinavia, though some wild reindeer do exist. Reindeer and Caribou are the only animals where both the males and females grow antlers. Bull reindeer typically lose their antlers in November/December, while pregnant females keep their antlers until the spring. If you happen to see Santa in his sleigh this month, just remember that it is likely being pulled by female reindeer!!

If you see a suspected case of Red Nose Syndrome in Reindeer or any other member of the cervid family (deer, elk, moose), please contact the wildlife health laboratory.