



Wyoming Game and Fish Department 2025 Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance Report

Overview

Since its initial detection in Wyoming (1985) chronic wasting disease (CWD), a fatal prion disease of cervids, continues to spread across the state (Figure 1). The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) CWD surveillance program focuses on two to three herd units from the eight WGFD regions each year. Efforts are concentrated on hunter-harvested adult male deer and adult elk (both sexes), with a sample target of 200 (collected within 1-3 consecutive years) in most deer and elk herd units. In non-endemic areas, where CWD has not been detected, opportunistic surveillance continues and utilizes hunter-harvest, road-kill, and animals showing signs of the disease or found dead with no apparent cause. This design allows for adequate sample sizes without exceeding the WGFD's Wildlife Health Laboratory (WHL) testing capacity.

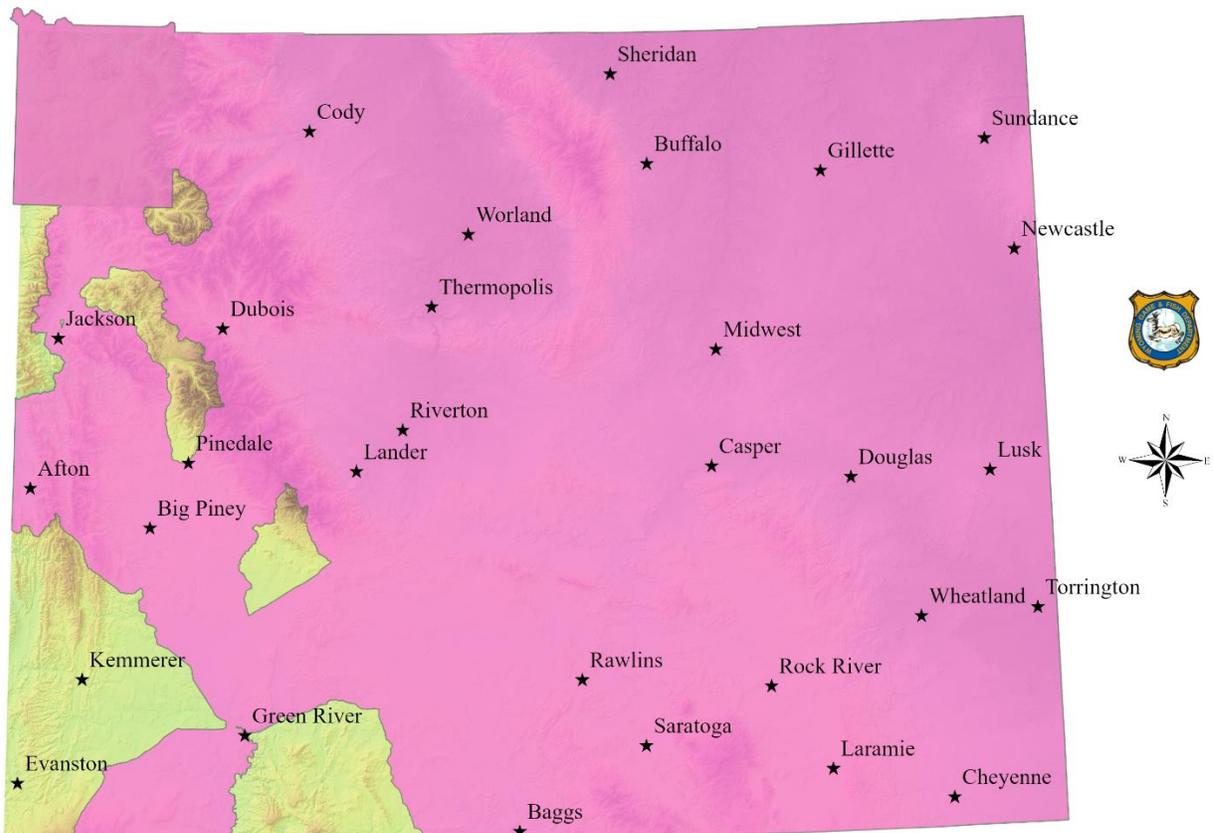


Figure 1. 2025 Statewide CWD distribution: All species (based on hunt area and National Park boundaries).

Surveillance and CWD Prevalence

Wyoming's CWD surveillance strategy was revamped in 2019 to provide a more statistically accurate disease prevalence. This updated strategy required at least 200 hunter harvested samples, from each herd (mule deer and elk), within a 5-year period, focusing on adult male mule deer and adult elk from both sexes. While this approach has allowed for disease data to be collected from a larger sample of species and areas, statistically significant sample sizes are still lacking in many herds. Disease prevalence estimates may be biased due to agency objectives, hunter success, hunter interest, and ease of access to sample collection.

2025 CWD Surveillance

Deer, elk, and moose samples were collected from across the state, through WGFD operations (check stations, field personnel and regional offices), with additional opportunistic samples collected with help from outside partners (meat processors, taxidermists, hunters and federal agencies). Retropharyngeal lymph nodes were predominantly collected due to their ease of extraction and suitability as a diagnostic tissue. Teeth were collected whenever possible to evaluate age structure, and age specific CWD prevalence within herd units.

The WHL is accredited for CWD diagnostics and utilizes enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays as the primary diagnostic tool. Immunohistochemistry is utilized as a confirmatory test when necessary. Individual CWD test results are available on the agency's website within three weeks of sample submission.

Priority Deer and Elk Herd Units for 2025

The Sublette and Wyoming Range mule deer herds, along with the Afton, Fall Creek, and Jackson elk herds are prioritized annually. For mule deer, the 2025 CWD surveillance focused on fourteen herd units which included mandatory sampling in six hunt areas (Figure 2). For elk, the 2025 CWD surveillance focused on six herd units (Figure 3).

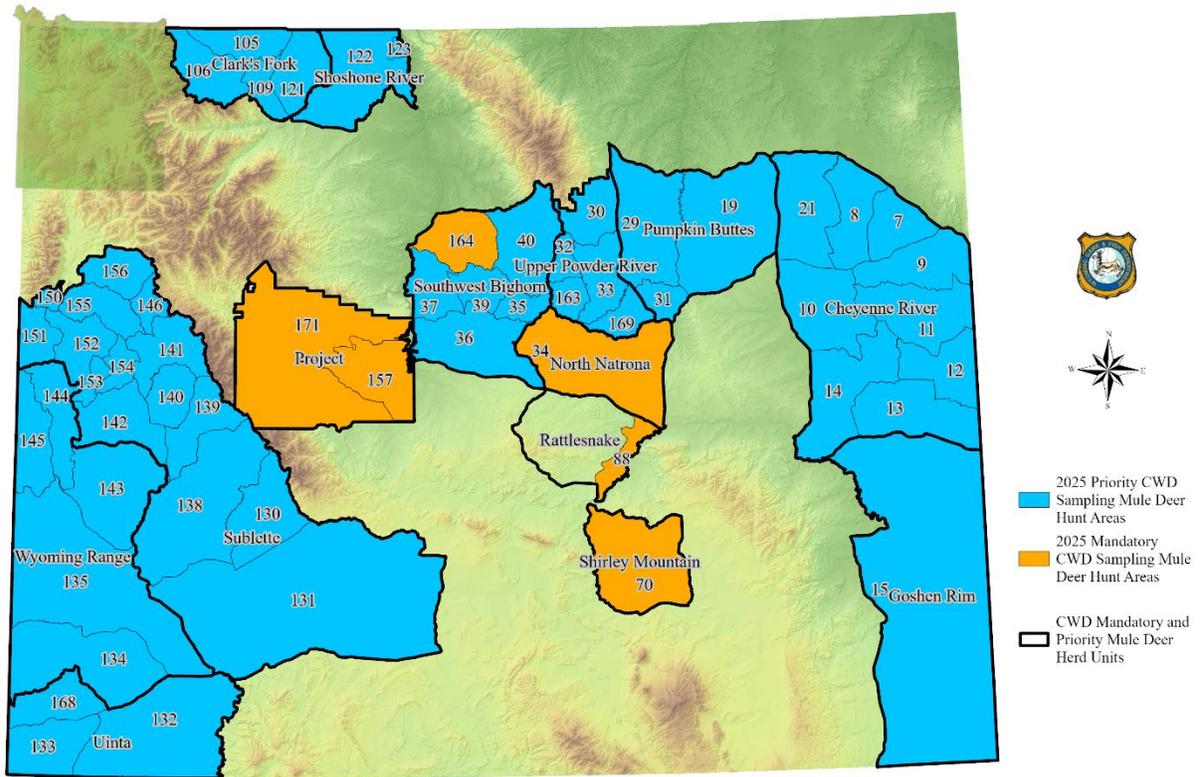


Figure 2. CWD sampling priority and mandatory mule deer herd units and hunt areas (2025).

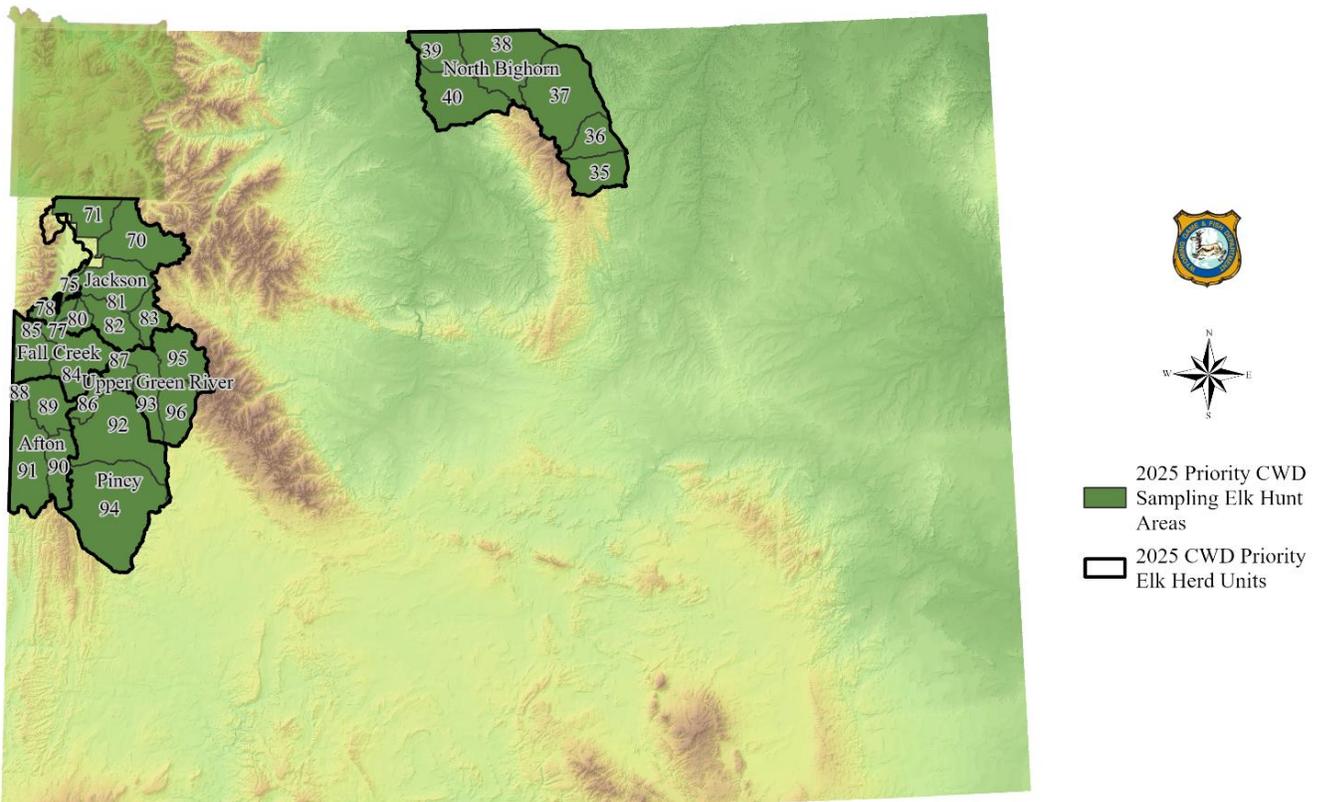


Figure 3. CWD sampling priority elk herd units and hunt areas (2025).

2025 Results and Discussion

The WHL analyzed a total of 5,370 deer, elk, and moose, with CWD being detected in 842 of those samples. This total includes samples from all surveillance categories (hunter-harvest, road-killed, and targeted (animals exhibiting signs of CWD or found dead with no discernible cause), and all sexes and age classes (Table 1). Table 2 outlines samples received from hunter-harvest adult (≥ 2 years old) male deer, adult elk and adult moose (both sexes). Overall submissions increased from 2024 (5,276).

Table 1. CWD surveillance totals by species and category (all ages and sexes; 2025).

Surveillance Category	Mule Deer		White-tailed Deer		Elk		Moose		Total	
	Total	CWD Detected	Total	CWD Detected	Total	CWD Detected	Total	CWD Detected	Total	CWD Detected
Hunter-harvest	2,144	419	799	187	1,595	34	42	0	4,580	640
Targeted	248	118	60	27	121	31	16	0	445	176
Road-kill	228	20	30	5	66	1	21	0	345	26
Total	2,620	557	889	219	1,782	66	79	0	5,370	842

Table 2. CWD surveillance of hunter-harvest adults according to species and sex (2025).

Adult Male Mule Deer		Adult Male White-Tailed Deer		Adult Elk		Adult Moose		Total	
Total	CWD Pos	Total	CWD Pos	Total	CWD Pos	Total	CWD Pos	Total	CWD Pos
1725	372	368	118	1350	32	42	0	3,485	522

Surveillance efforts identified CWD in three new mule deer hunt areas (106, 150, 153; Figure 4), all in western Wyoming. Six new elk hunt areas (2, 61, 62, 87, 93, 116; Figure 5) had CWD identified; four of those new detections were in the western part of the state.

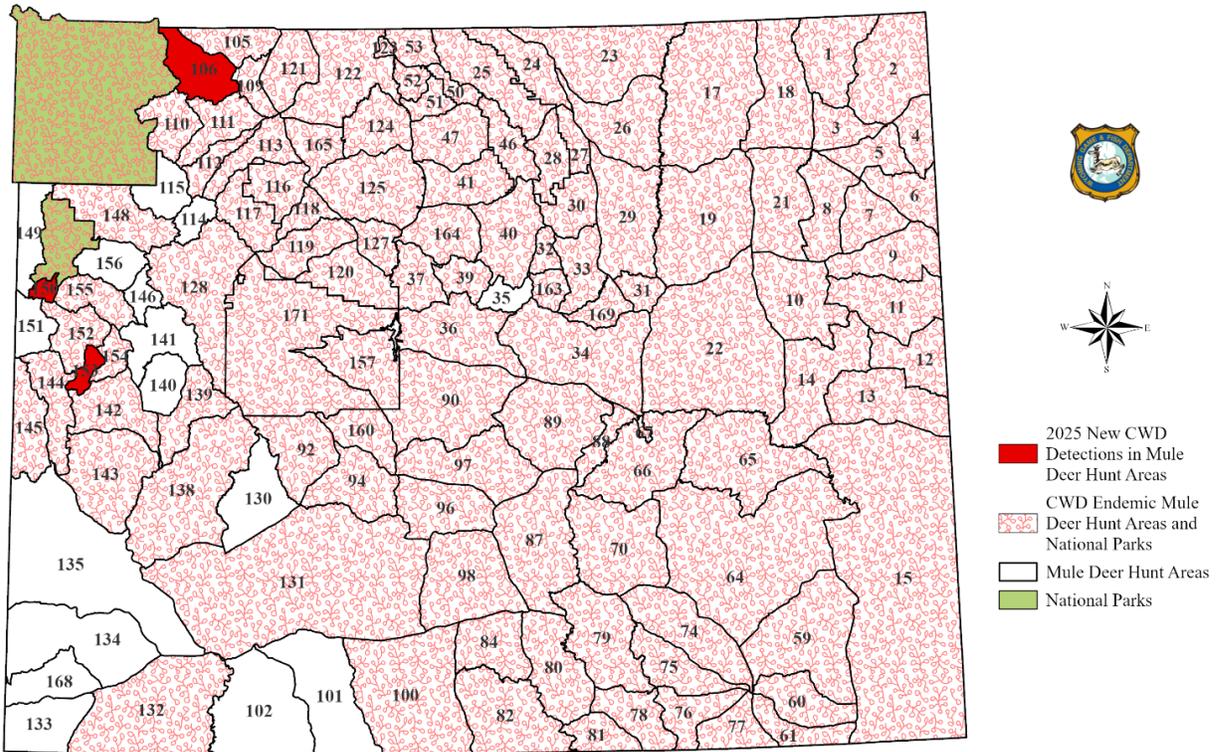


Figure 4. CWD endemic mule deer hunt areas and 2025 detections

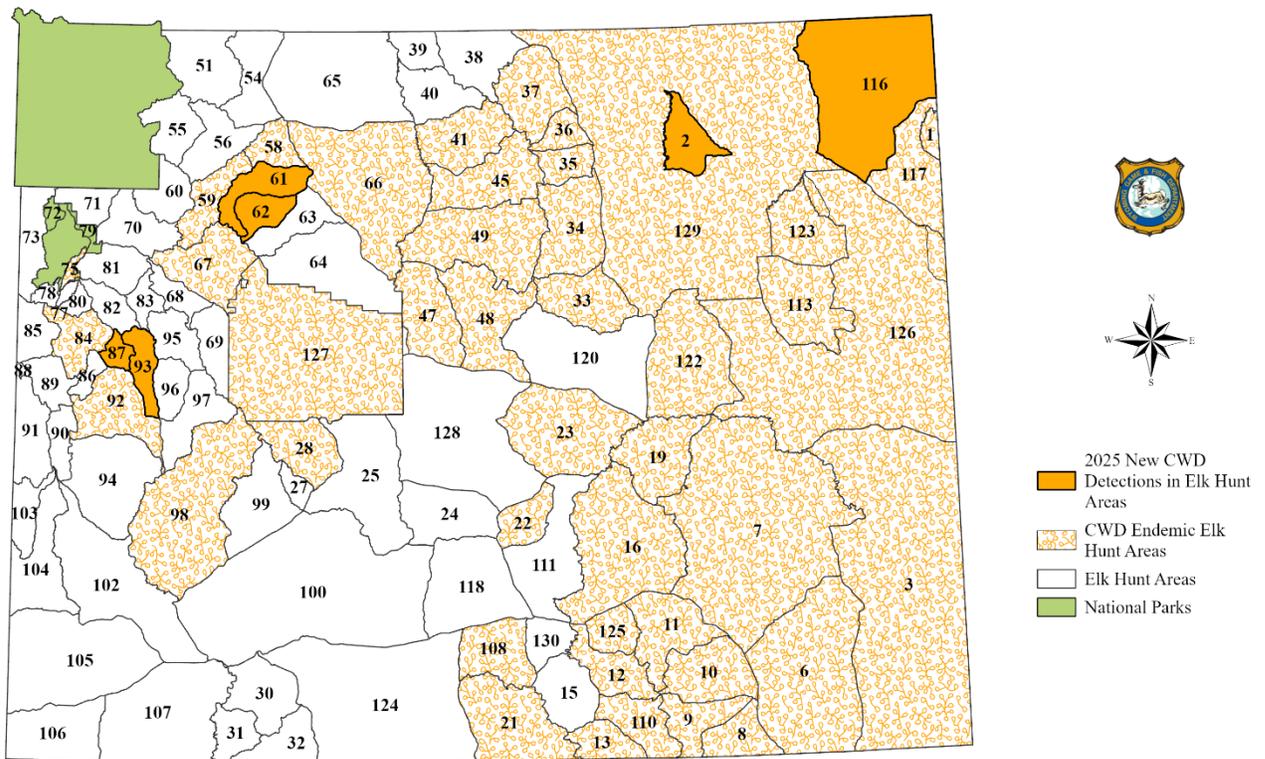


Figure 5. CWD endemic elk hunt areas and 2025 detections.

As of December 31, 2025, CWD had been detected in 35 of 37 (95%) of mule deer herds and 111 of 127 (87 %) of mule deer hunt areas. For elk, CWD had been detected in 24 of 34 (71%) designated elk herd units and 50 of 105 (48%) of elk hunt areas.

In 2025, statewide CWD prevalence in hunter-harvested, adult, male, mule deer was 21.6% (95% CI: 16.9% - 22.6%), representing an increase from 2024 (19.4%; 95% CI: 15.5% - 20.4%). Statewide prevalence in hunter-harvested, adult, male white-tailed deer was 32.1% (95% CI: 22.6% - 34.2%) in 2025, an increase from 2024 (29.2%; 95% CI: 21.1% - 31.1%). Finally, in 2025, statewide CWD prevalence in hunter-harvested adult elk was 2.4% (95% CI: 2.0% - 2.8%), a slight increase from 2024 (2.3%; 95% CI: 2.0% - 2.8%).

To determine CWD prevalence in individual herds, five-year averages were calculated (Figures 6 and 7). Of those herds, with adequate sample sizes, the 'Project herd' continues to have the highest CWD prevalence in the state at 61.9% (95% CI: 31.6% - 68.9%), followed by 'Goshen Rim' at 36.1% (95% CI: 21.0% - 43.4%) and 'Southwest Bighorn' at 30.5% (95% CI: 18.6% - 36.7%).

The 'Iron Mountain' elk herd had the highest CWD prevalence, of those elk herds with an adequate sample size, at 9.8% (95% CI: 6.9% - 12.4%), followed by 'North Bighorn' at 8.7% (95% CI: 5.6% - 12.0%) and 'South Bighorn' at 5.0% (95% CI: 2.6% - 8.4%).

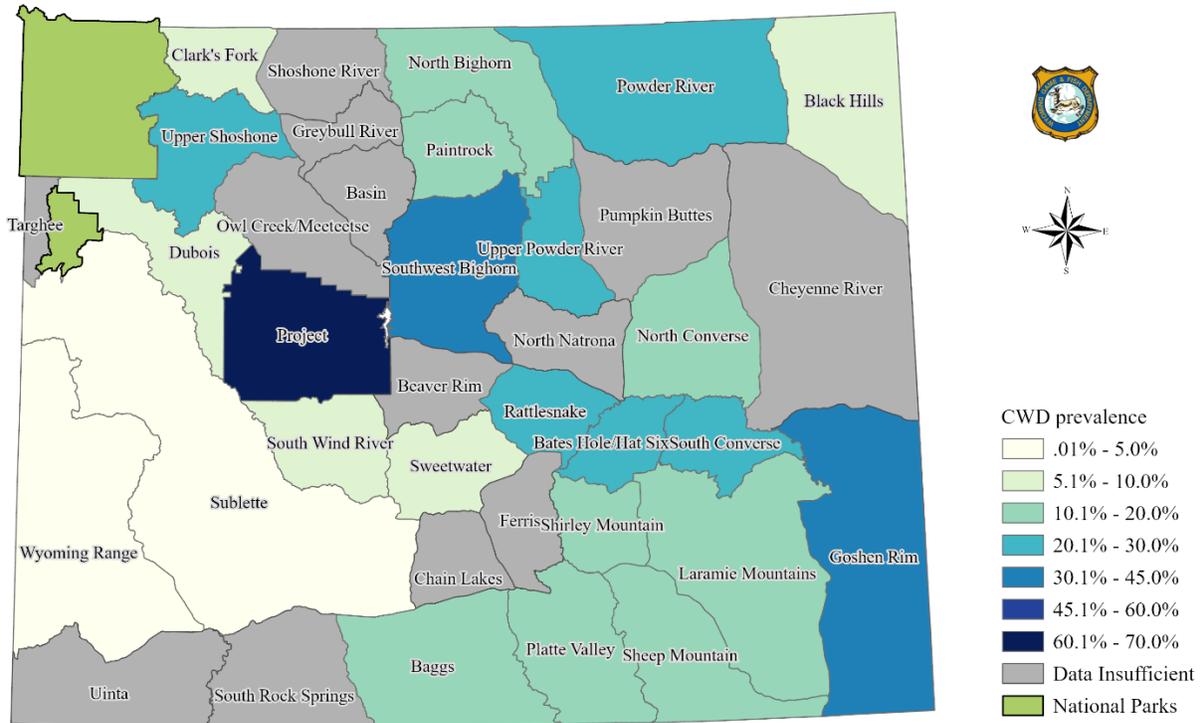


Figure 6. Chronic wasting disease prevalence in hunter harvested adult male mule deer by herd unit (2021-2025; data insufficient if less than 100 samples in consecutive 3-year period).

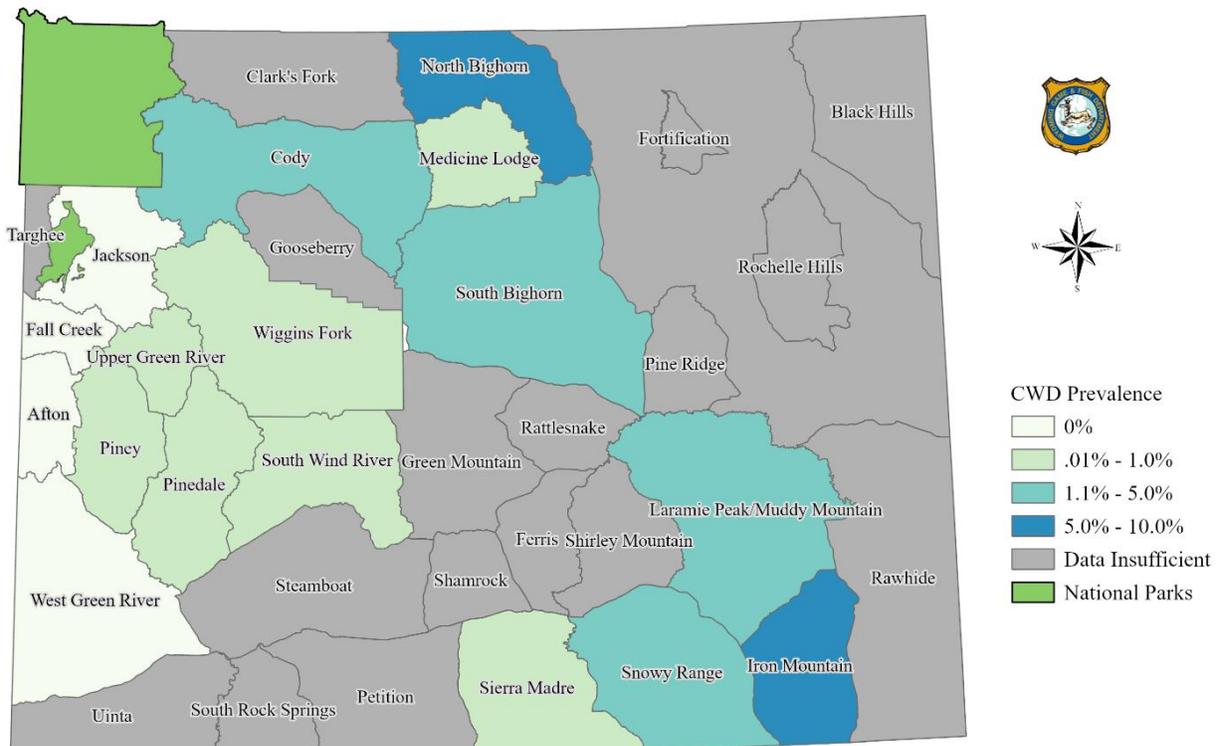


Figure 7. Chronic wasting disease prevalence in hunter harvested adult elk by herd unit (2021-2025; data insufficient if less than 100 samples in a consecutive 3-year period).

Understanding where sampling efforts are concentrated may provide a deeper understanding into disease distribution, prevalence, and can highlight sampling gaps (Figures 8 and 10).

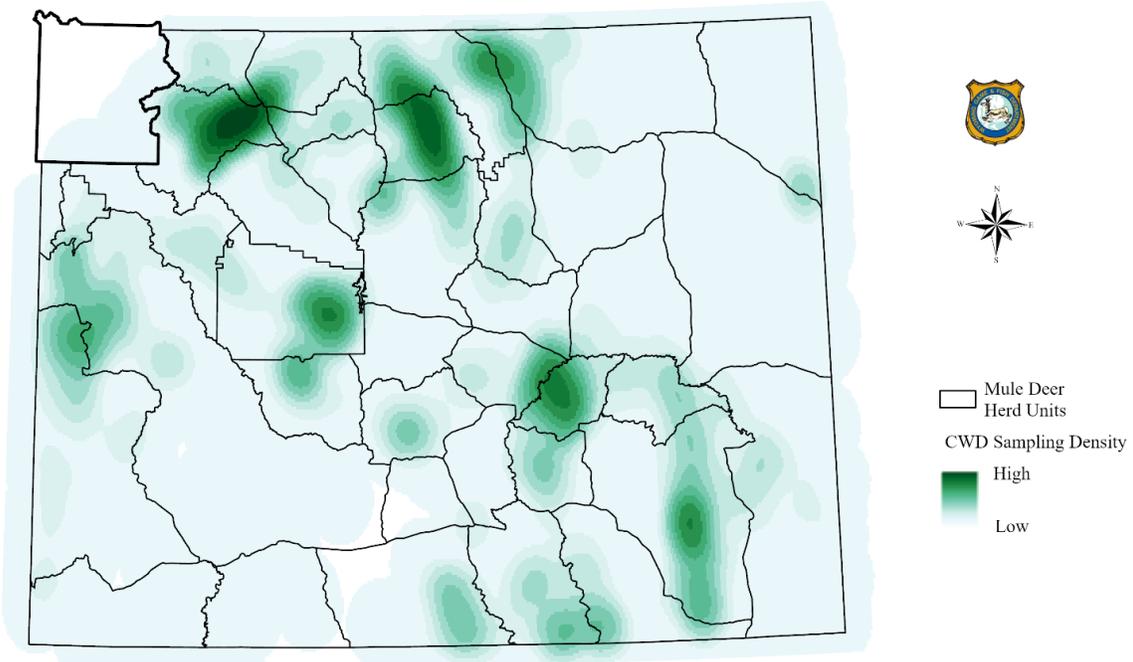


Figure 8. Chronic wasting disease sampling density of mule deer: all age, sex and surveillance type (2021-2025).

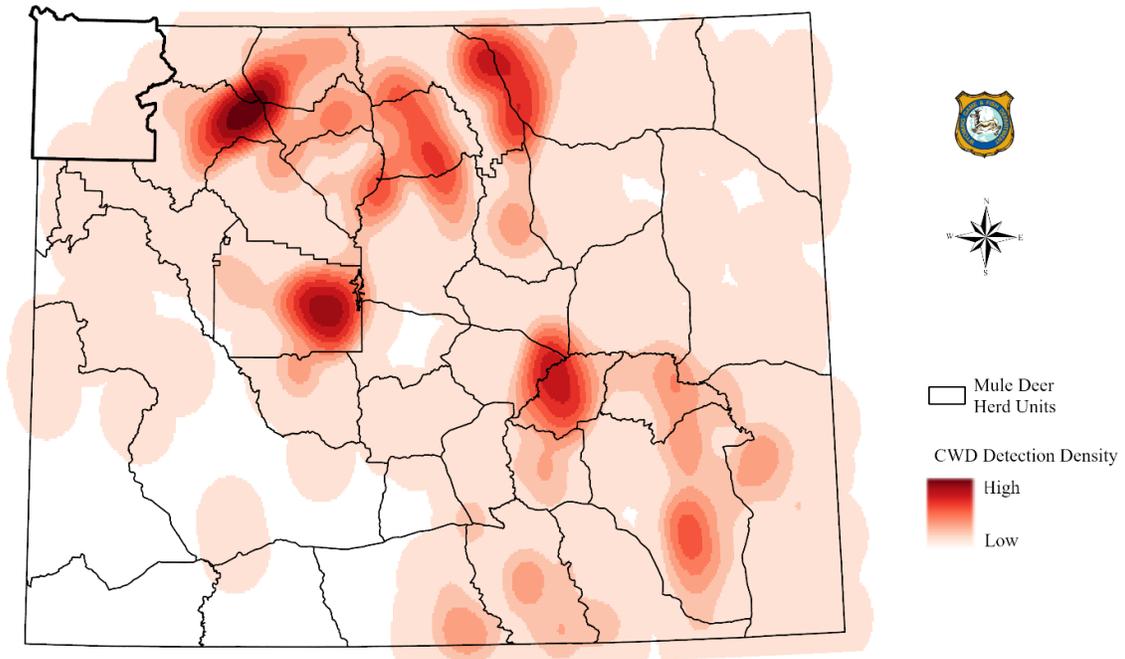


Figure 9. Chronic wasting disease detection density of mule deer: all age, sex and surveillance type (2021-2025).

CWD detections are not usually ubiquitous across a herd. While disease prevalence can provide wildlife managers with a general perspective on the amount of disease within a population, distinct areas of higher disease occurrence may provide better direction for targeted management action (Figures 9 and 11).

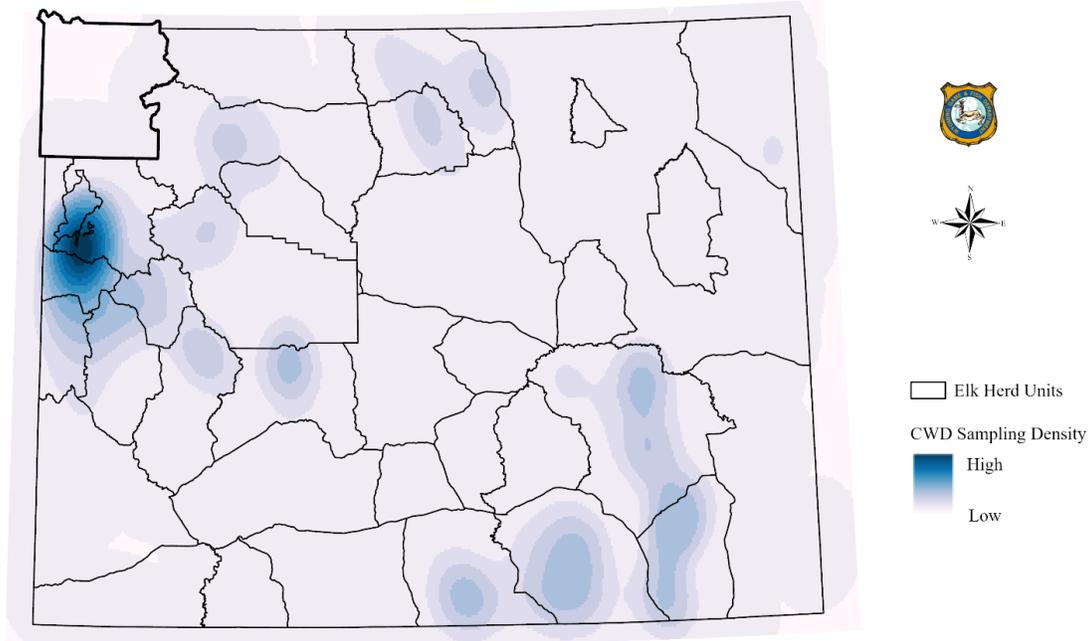


Figure 10. Chronic wasting disease sampling density of Elk: all age, sex and surveillance type (2021-2025).

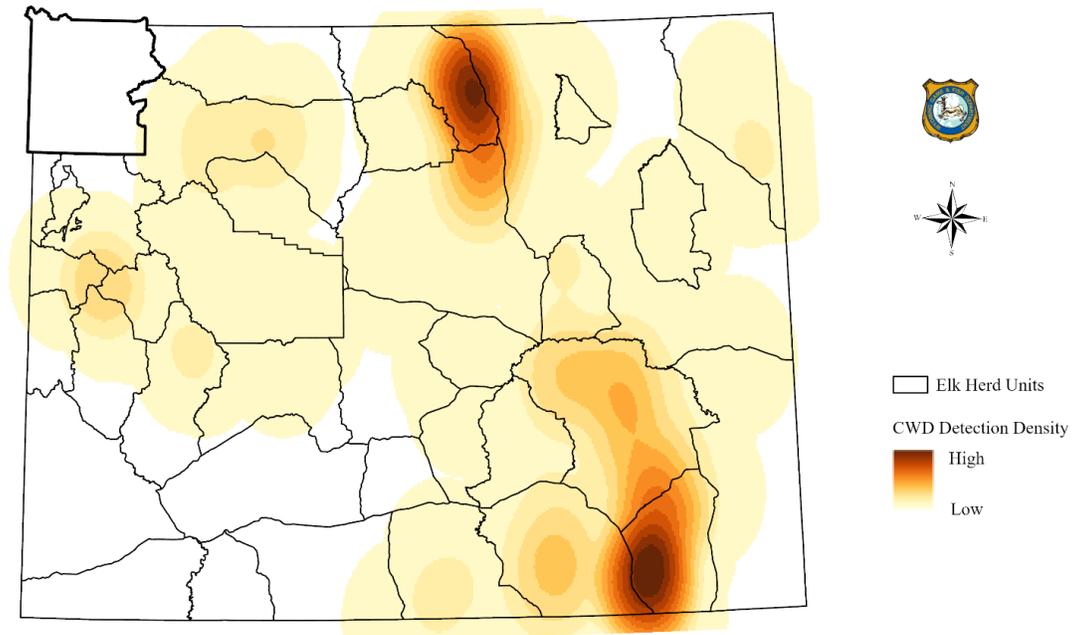


Figure 11. Chronic wasting disease detection density of Elk: all age, sex and surveillance type (2021-2025).

Sampling Effort in Non-Endemic Hunt Areas

As of the end of 2025, 13% of Wyoming’s deer hunt areas and 52% of elk hunt areas have not had CWD detected. Opportunistic surveillance for the disease continues in the non-endemic areas by utilizing hunter-harvested, road-killed and targeted animals (Table 3). Adequate sample sizes in these hunt areas are critical for early detection of the disease as management strategies can change with the status of CWD prevalence.

Table 3. Chronic wasting disease surveillance in non-endemic hunt areas of adult animals by species and surveillance type (2025).

Species	Hunter-harvest	Road Killed	Targeted	Total
Adult male deer*	59	5	1	65
Adult elk	453	47	93	593
Adult moose	42	14	11	67
Total	554	66	105	725

*Includes both mule deer and white-tailed

CWD in Western Wyoming and the Elk Feedgrounds

In 2025, CWD was detected in two new deer hunt areas, and four new elk hunt areas in western Wyoming. Between 2021 and 2025, CWD was detected in twenty-one deer and fifteen elk that were collected from hunt areas that contain at least one elk feedground. Of those detections in elk, nine were collected within the boundaries of a feedground. Those feedgrounds included Dell Creek (6), Black Butte (1), Horse Creek (1), and Scab Creek (1). Elk herds utilizing feedgrounds are annually prioritized for hunter harvested CWD sampling and the department continues to actively monitor and sample any mortalities on/around the feedgrounds to increase surveillance numbers. The department is currently developing Feedground Management Action Plans that will include a section on disease mitigation and management.

CWD Management

With CWD prevalence increasing in the Project mule deer herd (>50% in buck mule deer), the hunt area 157 type 1 deer season was replaced with a general season in 2025. Licenses for Type 3, 6 and 8 were also increased. These changes were made to decrease mule deer densities and limit the spread of disease to adjacent deer herds. Five-year average CWD prevalence (2021-2025) in the Project herd can be seen in Table 4. Sampling and detection density for 2021-2025 can be seen in Figures 12 and 13.

Table 4. 5-year (2021-2025) Average CWD prevalence in the Project Mule Deer Herd by Species, Sex and Age (Hunter-Harvested).

Species-Sex-Age	CWD Prevalence 95% Confidence Interval Range	Sample Size
Mule Deer – Male - Adult	31.6% - 68.9%	189
Mule Deer – Female - Adult	18.9% - 40.8%	161
White-tailed Deer – Male - Adult	21.1% - 38.2%	382
White-tailed Deer – Female - Adult	15.5% - 28.9%	326

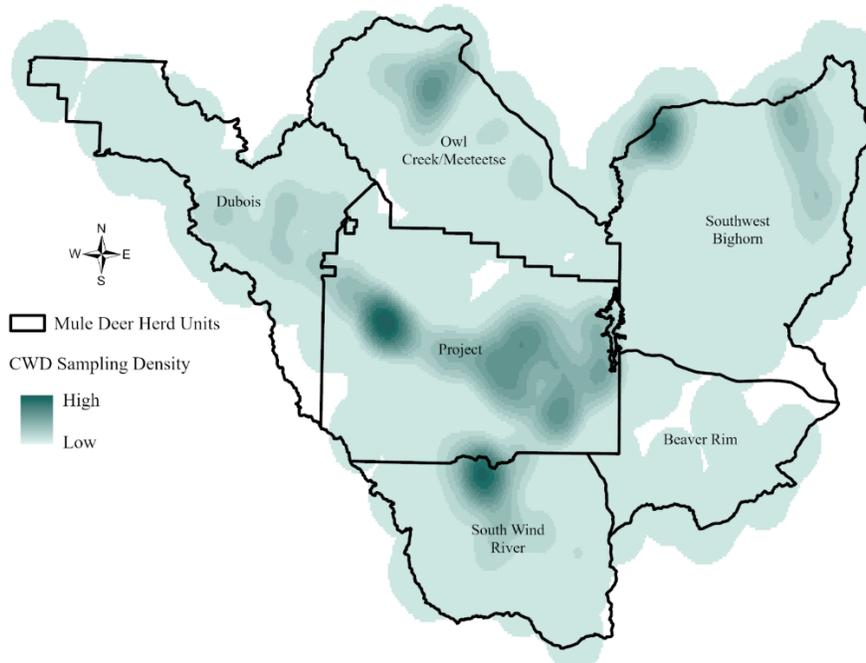


Figure 12. Chronic wasting disease sampling density in the Project and adjacent herds: mule deer and white-tailed deer, all age, sex and surveillance types (2021-2025).

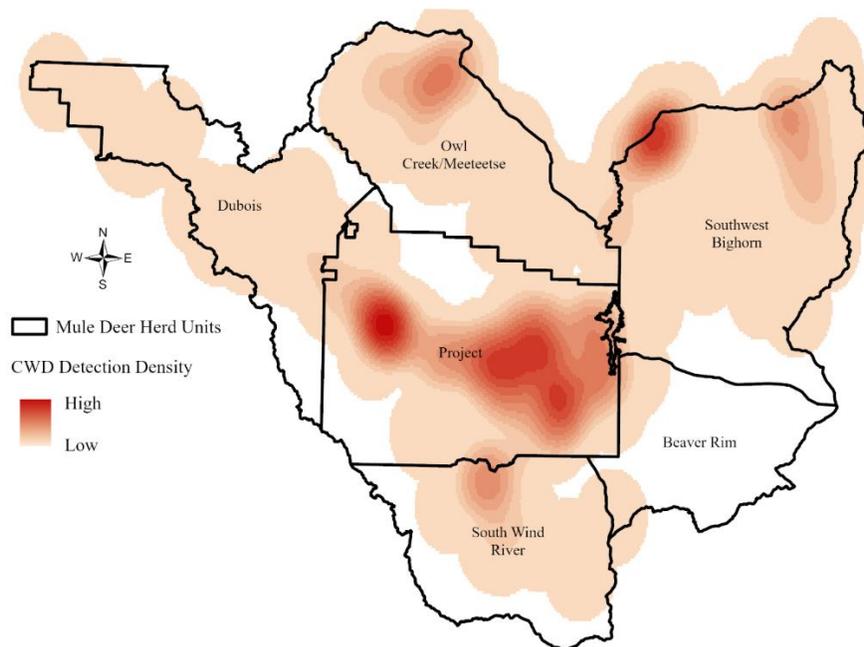


Figure 13. Chronic wasting disease detection density in the Project and adjacent herds: mule deer and white-tailed deer, all age, sex and surveillance types (2021-2025).

For general information on CWD in Wyoming, please visit: <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/CWD>