MDARD Warns of EHD in Domestic Deer Facilities

Owners should check health of cervids daily

LANSING - Officials with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and Michigan State University’s (MSU) Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health (DCPAH) today confirmed Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) at two Privately Owned Cervid (POC) facilities in Barry and Ionia Counties. EHD is not transmissible to humans, but is an acute, infectious, and fatal disease caused by biting midges which primarily impacts cervids.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and MSU’s DCPAH recently confirmed affected wild White-tailed deer in 17 counties: Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Clinton, Eaton, Gratiot, Ionia, Jackson, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon, Ottawa, Shiawassee, and St. Joseph. Additionally, there is a nationwide increase of EHD outbreaks due to the extended hot and dry conditions.

“This is not a coincidence,” said State Veterinarian Dr. Steven L. Halstead. “Owners of cervid facilities should make themselves aware of EHD cases occurring in wild White-tailed deer in Michigan and other states and take measures to manage biting insects around these valuable animals.”

EHD is contracted most often by wild White-tailed deer, but was reported in domesticated deer in 2006. EHD is transmitted via blood feeding midges. The disease cannot be transmitted from one animal to another by direct contact. EHD typically is detected in wild White-tailed deer in late summer and early fall. Large die-offs of up to 100 animals have been reported, often near water because EHD causes high fever and dehydration.

Deer infected with the virus are often sluggish, confused, lame, and unresponsive to humans. As the disease progresses, the deer may have discharge from the nose and mouth along with sores in the mouth and a swollen tongue. Hemorrhages are
commonly present throughout the internal organs and stomach area and blood is found in the body cavities.

Some animals may die suddenly without displaying any clinical signs. Animals that do die from disease or injury in a POC facility must be submitted for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing as required by the state of Michigan's mandatory CWD surveillance plan.

Owners of POC facilities who find sick or dead animals should submit them for postmortem examination (necropsy) at DCPAH. Veterinarians can submit lung, kidney, and spleen and liver tissues for PCR testing. For further instructions, please call DCPAH at (517) 353-1683.

Visit the following link for DNR's weekly updates on EHD: http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,4579,7-186--283966--,00.html

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