



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 23, 2021

- [21 deer test positive for chronic wasting disease](#)
- [2021 winter has been tough on deer](#)
- [Habitat is critical for pheasants during long, hard winters](#)
- [Take time to clean and inspect lifejackets ahead of boating season](#)
- [When selling Iowa timber, be sure to only use a bonded timber buyer](#)
- [It's time for a midwinter boat checkup](#)

21 deer test positive for chronic wasting disease

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources' 2020 surveillance of Iowa's wild deer herd for the presence of chronic wasting disease has yielded 21 new positive deer, and has added two new counties to the list where positive deer have been found.

The new positive deer were all from either an existing chronic wasting disease zone or adjacent to an existing zone. Two new counties were added to list where deer have tested positive. Jackson County had a positive deer that was taken just south of the existing Dubuque disease management zone, and Appanoose County had a positive deer taken just northeast of the existing Corydon disease management zone.

"Although we expect some spread just outside of our existing zones, it's not what we like to see," said Tyler Harms, deer program leader for the Iowa DNR. "We will reassess the boundaries of our existing zones to encompass these new positives."

The Iowa DNR has a map online at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Deer-Hunting/Deer-Disease-Information> showing where the positive deer have been taken. To date, 111 wild Iowa deer have tested positive for the disease since 2013 when it was first discovered in the state.

"We rely heavily on our hunters to help us respond to this disease by increasing antlerless harvest in our disease management zones," Harms said. "We know increased harvest is the best way to slow the spread and it helps increase sampling in these zones so we can monitor disease prevalence and spread. We continue to encourage hunters to harvest additional antlerless deer in these disease management zones."

The 2020 sampling year ends March 31 and while most of the deer samples are collected during the hunting seasons, the DNR does collect samples from road killed deer and suspected sick deer near the deer disease management zones annually beginning April 1.

Media Contact: Tyler Harms, Biometrician, Wildlife Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-777-5378.

2021 winter has been tough on deer

For wildlife, surviving an average Iowa winter is challenging enough. When the winter includes consecutive days where temperatures don't cross above zero and new snow arrives weekly, survival can become extremely difficult.

"Every winter we lose wildlife but in winters like this, we do expect some additional mortality," said Tyler Harms, deer program leader for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "While people may think it's a good idea to put out a pile of corn for the deer to eat, it actually causes more harm than good. Perhaps the biggest issue with feeding deer is the increased risk of spreading disease through the local herd."

Artificially congregating deer in close quarters, like over a pile of corn, increases the likelihood of disease transmission to other deer.

"All it takes is for one deer to be infected with a disease to stop by, feed on the corn and leave its saliva and urine behind for there to become an outbreak," Harms said. "But beyond disease transmission, feeding deer can cause other health issues."

In winter, a pile of corn is the equivalent to a pile of candy, Harms said, and too much candy is not good for anyone. "There is other food available that is better for them," he said.

It's also important to not set out grains because it changes deer behavior.

"When the snow is deep and it's hard to find food, deer will adjust biologically to the situation to conserve energy," he said. "They will congregate in places where there is shelter and they can conserve their energy. Placing food out will cause them to change that behavior, possibly expending more energy to get to the grain than they will gain by eating it."

Those interested in helping deer to survive Iowa winters are encouraged to reach out to their local Iowa DNR wildlife biologist to discuss what types of habitat and food sources to install that benefit deer.

Media Contact: Tyler Harms, Biometrician, Wildlife Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-777-5378.

Habitat is critical for pheasants during long, hard winters

Iowa's run of mild winters is gone, buried under a head-high snowdrift and frozen from weeks of negative temperatures. This return to the extreme has some residents wanting

to help the now highly visible pheasants and quail and calling the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) about placing corn and other grains out for the birds to eat.

While that sounds like a good idea, Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist with the Iowa DNR said what these birds need most is shelter, not food.

“Their survival is not dependent on food supplies,” he said. “Virtually all of Iowa’s winter pheasant and quail mortality can be attributed to the lack of adequate winter habitat. Without it, the birds are vulnerable to hypothermia and exposure from severe wind chill and blowing snow.”

Iowa’s recent run of bitterly cold weather, wind and blowing snow highlights the need for winter habitat not only to survive the arctic conditions and avoid predators looking for a meal, but come spring, that habitat becomes important for pheasant and quail chicks to survive.

“Quality habitat and winter cover are really the key to not only surviving a winter like this, but to allow the pheasants and quail that do make it to spring to rebuild the populations,” Bogenschutz said. “These birds are amazingly resilient if they have the proper habitat.”

For those interested in helping wildlife, Bogenschutz recommended they develop quality habitat on a portion of their land to allow the birds to survive future winters.

“Once winter sets in, it’s too late,” he said.

The Iowa DNR recommends a minimum of two acres of multi-row conifer/shrub shelterbelts, switchgrass and cattails next to food plots for habitat. Food plots should be between 2-5 acres and at least 100 yards from tall trees. Corn and sorghum provide the best food source in heavy snow.

Landowners interested in developing habitat should contact their local Iowa DNR private lands staff at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/DNR-Staff-Offices> then scroll down to the Private Lands Staff pdf link, Pheasants Forever staff or the NRCS. Cost-share assistance for shelterbelts, switchgrass, and food plot establishment is available from most county Pheasants Forever chapters.

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-979-0828.

Take time to clean and inspect lifejackets ahead of boating season

Surprising as it may seem, February is not a busy boating month in Iowa. But it is a good time to clean and inspect important boating equipment – lifejackets – so its ready to go when the snow and ice finally disappear.

Susan Stocker, boating law administrator and education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said it’s important to regularly examining lifejackets for wear and tear.

“Lifejackets get tossed around, spend time in the water and sun, and are stuffed under seats and in other available storage. They get dirty and beat up. This is a good time of year to get them out and give them a little TLC,” she said.

She recommended each lifejacket be visually inspected for any rips or tears and ensure all straps and buckles work properly and not frayed. Inflatable lifejackets should be free of any cracks or pin holes in the plastic bladder, the CO₂ cartridge sealed and stored in temperatures above freezing.

“All lifejackets should be stored in a cool, dry location to prevent mold or mildew,” Stocker said.

Cleaning

To clean and disinfect inherently buoyant lifejackets, toss them in a front-loading washing machine with liquid detergent and run gentle cycle with cold water. Make sure all flaps and straps are fastened before washing to avoid damage. Hang to dry in a well-ventilated area.

To clean and disinfect inflatable lifejackets – first, ensure the inflator is disarmed. Do not dry clean, use chlorine bleach or apply heat. Do not machine launder inflatables – hand wash or sponge down in soapy water near 140 degrees or as hot as you can stand. Be careful of burns when hand washing, taking care not to submerge the inflator. Rinse in clean water and hang to dry on a plastic coat hanger.

Mild over the counter spray disinfectants may also be used on both types of lifejackets. The material used in lifejackets is consistent with most sports equipment so surface sprays that do not saturate fabrics may be used. Always store fully dried lifejackets in warm, dry well ventilated places out of direct sunlight.

Media Contact: Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439.

When selling Iowa timber, be sure to only use a bonded timber buyer

Iowa is known as a state full of friendly people. There’s even a term for it – Iowa Nice. And while some business transactions with friendly people can take place with just a handshake, selling timber shouldn’t be among them.

“Only sell your timber to a bonded timber buyer,” said Aron Flickinger, forestry program specialist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “Anyone trying to buy your trees who is not a bonded timber buyer is breaking the law.”

Iowa’s woodlands are capable of growing high quality timber that can be sold in markets around the world. Iowa’s bonded timber buyer program requires those businesses to set aside money in the form of a surety bond or certificate of deposit to help compensate a person in the event they are not paid for their timber.

Flickinger said its also important to have a written contract that outlines how the timber sale will proceed.

“The most common calls I receive come from landowners who had someone who was not a bonded timber buyer cut their trees on a verbal agreement,” he said. “Without a written contract, there is little we can do except to try to find the person and cite them for not being a bonded timber buyer. This program can’t help the landowner in this situation because of the lack of evidence on the terms of sale.”

To avoid those pitfalls, Flickinger encouraged landowners to contact the Iowa DNR foresters who are available to help them to manage their woodlands. The DNR has a list of foresters online at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Forestry-Landowner-Assistance>

“Working with a DNR forester or one from the private sector will enable landowners to make informed decisions to keep the woodlot productive, healthy, rejuvenating the right trees, while generating income from trees ready to harvest,” Flickinger said. “And the best way to find out how much the trees within your timber are worth is to solicit bids from multiple bonded timber buyers.”

To find out if a logger is a bonded timber buyer go to www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Wood-Industry-Logging

“If you’re not ready to sell, enjoy the scenery those trees are providing and learn more about what you have growing on your property,” he said. “The better you understand what you have, the more likely you are to enjoy the many benefits those trees are providing to you. Whether you are managing your timber for income or wildlife habitat, consider consulting with a forester to assist you in managing your timber for your specific wants and needs.”

Media Contact: Aron Flickinger, Forestry Program Specialist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-291-2829.

It’s time for a midwinter boat checkup

A midwinter visit to check on the boat – no matter if stored ashore in a backyard or a marina parking lot – is a wise thing to do. Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS) has four tips to ensure there are no surprises at spring commissioning.

Water is bad. The number-one concern for any boat in long-term winter storage is water. It can’t be allowed in, but if it does, the water needs a way out. Check the boat’s winter cover to ensure it still allows rain and heavy snow loads to easily shed away from the boat. Small boats should have the drain plug removed. A tight-fitting winter cover will also help keep out the critters, including raccoons, feral cats and muskrats, whose damage boat insurance policies generally do not cover.

Take it home. If you forgot to bring home life jackets when you put the boat away in the fall, it’s best to do it now. That includes throwable devices you keep near the helm. Lifejackets will last longer and stay cleaner. Store in a dry location at home. Signal flares

can be kept aboard if they are in location not affected by moisture. Some handheld air horns can leave a not-easy-to-remove rust ring when stored in their upright position. Both signal devices can be put into zip top freezer bags. Other common items left on the boat during winter storage are liquid cleaners that can burst open during the freeze/thaw cycle and food, which draw vermin.

Air it out. Try to ventilate the boat, which will help keep mold and mildew at bay. If the boat is closed tightly and doesn't have ventilation, use desiccants – often sold in bucket type containers – in cuddy cabins or living space below. Follow the manufacturer instructions and you should be able keep a fairly dry boat making spring cleanup easier and preserving the boat's value.

Be safe. There may be ice and snow this time of year. If you need to use a ladder, ensure its firmly planted, always tie it off at the top, and have a friend hold it while ascending/descending. Never move or adjust a jack stand – call the yard for assistance. Tying off a winter cover to jack stands is also a bad idea as the stands could be yanked out from under the boat during high winds.