

For Release: IMMEDIATE
Tuesday, October 16, 2007

Contact: Maureen Wren
(518) 402-8000

DEC CONFIRMS FIRST CASE OF DEER DISEASE IN NEW YORK
Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease is Detected in Deer Samples From Albany County

Recent tests for Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in several Albany County deer have come back positive, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced today. This is the first confirmed detection of EHD in New York State. EHD does not present a threat to human health.

“DEC’s wildlife managers have been monitoring EHD as it has worked its way north through neighboring states,” DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis said. “While other states’ experiences indicate that it is not anticipated to have a long-term effect on the health of our deer herd, we will continue to monitor the spread of this disease and its potential impact.”

EHD is predominantly a disease affecting deer and is transmitted by certain types of biting flies called midges. It mainly affects deer in late summer and fall, but the flies die and the disease subsides when frosts and colder temperatures occur. EHD is common in many southeastern states and has been reported throughout the mid-Atlantic this summer. In states where the disease has been detected, it has not had a significant negative impact on long-term health of the deer herd, and infecting instead only localized pockets of animals within a geographic area.

The remains of more than twenty deer were found in the greater Voorheesville area of Albany County in recent days. Several deer carcasses were delivered to DEC’s Wildlife Pathology Laboratory in Delmar, Albany County, to undergo a necropsy and microscopic examination to determine possible cause of death. In addition to EHD, deer were sampled for Chronic Wasting Disease, rabies, poisoning, and other potential mortality causes. Samples were sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory and the Southeast Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study laboratory. Those tests confirmed the presence of EHD in the deer tissue.

There are several symptoms of EHD, all of which are not necessarily present in an infected deer. They include: swollen head, neck, tongue or eyelids; erosion of the dental pad or ulcers on the tongue; hemorrhaging of the heart, lungs, rumen and intestines; peeling of hooves; and high fever, leading infected deer to sometimes be found near water sources. For more information about EHD, go to www.uga.edu/scwds/index.htm .

(MORE)

DEC continues to request the assistance of hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts in providing information to the Department about any sick, dying or dead animals encountered in the field. Sick or dead deer should be promptly reported to the nearest regional DEC office or to 1-800-TIPP-DEC.

Hunters are reminded that they should always take simple precautions to protect themselves from exposure to disease. Hunters that harvest a deer that is found to be diseased may be issued a replacement tag by DEC. To minimize the risk of transmission of any infectious diseases when handling or processing deer, the following precautions are recommended:

- Do not handle or eat any deer that appear sick, act strangely, or are found dead and contact DEC immediately.
- Wear rubber gloves when field dressing game.
- Wash instruments and any parts of the body exposed to animal tissues, blood, urine, etc. thoroughly with soap and water.
- Have your game processed promptly.
- Request that animals are processed individually, without mixing or coming into contact with meat from other animals.
- Consumption of organ meat (including brain, spinal cord, and other nervous tissue, spleen, pancreas, eyes, tonsils and lymph nodes) may pose a greater risk of infection with a number of diseases. Hunters should have deer boned out and have as much fat, connective tissue and lymph nodes removed as possible.
- In general, people should not consume an animal known or suspected to be ill.

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease is also a threat to captive, farmed white-tailed deer. Livestock may also be infected to a limited extent. Pennsylvania has reported that beef and dairy cattle experienced infection with EHD this year. Typically, isolated animals in a herd have displayed dramatic oral ulcerations, fever, drooling, teat lesions, and coronary band lesions. No cattle deaths have been reported in Pennsylvania associated with this outbreak.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and USDA APHIS VS will respond to reports of this disease in domestic livestock including farmed deer. Animals showing symptoms consistent with the above should be brought to the attention of state and federal authorities. Please report suspect cases of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease in farmed deer or livestock to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets at 518-457-3502 or to USDA APHIS VS at 518-869-9007.