



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #451

### Deer Carcass Disposal Grants (Natural Resources -- Fish and Wildlife)

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 429, #1]

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#### CURRENT LAW

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a fatal neurological disease in cervids such as deer and elk. The disease was first discovered in Wisconsin deer in 2002. The disease is communicable through deformed prions that can pass to other cervids through saliva, urine, or blood. Prions shed by infected animals also are thought to persist in soils, although infectivity and the length of prion viability is still being researched. State management of CWD includes collecting and testing tissue from harvested deer, public outreach to inform the public about CWD, CWD research, deer and elk farm inspection, and carcass disposal.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. CWD is a chronic disease that causes a cervid's brain to degenerate. Affected animals behave abnormally, eating and drinking irregularly. As the animal's brain deteriorates, the animal can lose control of bodily functions. CWD-affected deer are thought to be more vulnerable to predation and other non-natural causes of death like car collisions. Since CWD-affected deer have a higher propensity for mortality, the disease can have population-level impacts. Models of white-tail deer mortality in CWD-endemic deer herds suggest that herd population may decline by 10% annually.

2. The DNR CWD response plan has six key objectives including: (a) prevention of new CWD introductions; (b) monitoring for and responding to new CWD foci; (c) controlling CWD distribution and intensity; (d) increasing public recognition and understanding of CWD risks and public participation in disease control; (e) addressing the needs of DNR customers; and (f) enhancing scientific information about CWD.

3. After deer hunters take a deer, they often field dress their deer, leaving the entrails on

the ground to decompose. If the harvested deer had CWD, prions can leach into the ground from the carcass's blood or other fluids. These prions can remain in the ground for an unknown length of time and can be transmitted to other deer. To reduce CWD transmission, DNR encourages hunters to dispose of deer carcasses in a designated receptacle in CWD-endemic areas, rather than leave the carcass on the landscape.

4. During deer hunting season, DNR administers the Adopt-a-Dumpster (AAD) program, where local governments and conservation groups can sponsor a portion of the cost of contracting with a waste management company to collect and haul deer carcasses. DNR began the Adopt-a-Dumpster program in the autumn 2018 deer hunting season.

5. Beginning in the autumn 2019 deer season, DNR began providing AAD participants up to half the cost of contracting for containers, with a maximum cost-share of \$500 per participant. Participants agree to host a receptacle placed near hunting areas where hunters may dispose of deer carcasses to prevent exposure to prions. Hosts contract with waste disposal companies to dispose of the carcasses. In addition to the AAD program, DNR contracts for deer carcass receptacles on some Department properties. The following table shows the number of participants, as well as DNR expenditures related to the AAD program.

#### **Adopt-a-Dumpster Participation**

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Cost-Share Participants</u>	<u>DNR Expense</u>
2018-19	16	-	-
2019-20	61	38	\$13,000
2020-21*	55	49	12,200

\*Preliminary

6. DNR reports that the Department expended \$73,400 for deer carcass disposal in 2019-20. This amount includes the \$13,000 shown in the table for the Department's share for the program, as well as approximately \$32,000 for carcass disposal from DNR properties and CWD testing sites, \$22,400 for salaries and fringe benefits associated with managing deer carcass disposal, as \$6,000 in additional associated costs such as travel and supplies. Department-hosted containers cost between \$100 and \$2,000.

7. AB 68/SB 111 would provide DNR with one-time funding of \$1,000,000 fish and wildlife SEG in 2021-22 in a continuing appropriation to provide grants to local governments, businesses, or nonprofit conservation organizations for the acquisition of receptacles for the disposal of deer carcasses. Currently, DNR operates the AAD program under the Department's broad authority to manage wildlife in the state. The Committee could consider creating an Adopt-a-Dumpster program, authorizing DNR to award grants to state agencies, local and tribal governments, NCOs and businesses for up half the cost of contracting with waste disposal companies to host and haul deer carcass disposal sites [Alternative A1].

8. DNR indicates that the one-time \$1,000,000 proposed in AB 68/SB 111 would provide funds for DNR carcass disposal as well as the Department's share of the AAD program for several years. Based on the Department's cost of \$73,400 in 2019-20, one-time funding of \$1,000,000 would fund deer carcass disposal programs for 13 years. The Committee could consider providing \$1,000,000 as one-time funding to fund the AAD program [Alternative 1a].

9. It should be noted that one-time funding typically is used for one-time projects, rather than ongoing expenses, providing grants, or salaries and fringe benefits. However, the AAD program has only been operational for three hunting seasons and DNR has only supported a cost-share for two seasons. It is difficult to project demand for the program. The Committee could consider providing \$75,000 as one-time funding in each year of the 2021-23 biennium to fund a two-year pilot program for deer carcass disposal [Alternative 1b]. During the 2022 fall deer hunting season (in fiscal year 2022-23), DNR would have four years of data to project program demand and request long-term funding for the program.

10. CWD is a long-term problem. Research has shown that CWD prions can last in the ground for years. Given the urgency of the issue, it could be argued that it is important to provide funding for a long-term program. This would provide stability to allow businesses, NCOs and local governments to plan to host waste containers annually during deer hunting seasons. The Committee could provide \$75,000 annually to fund the Department's share of the AAD program [Alternative 1c]. As shown above, DNR paid \$13,000 in 2019-20 for the program. However, since demand is uncertain, providing additional funding would allow the program to expand to provide funding to more participants.

11. As noted above, DNR paid \$22,400 in salaries and fringe benefits for personnel costs related to deer carcass disposal in 2019-20. If the Committee creates a long-term program, DNR would likely need to manage grants and deer carcass disposal programming. Additionally, DNR staff would likely need to inspect disposal sites to ensure grant compliance. In addition to creating a dedicated deer carcass disposal grant, consideration could be given to providing \$25,000 for limited-term employee (LTE) salaries and fringe benefits to manage the program [Alternative 2].

12. In addition to appropriating one-time funding for the deer carcass disposal program, AB 68/SB 111 would provide \$50,000 SEG from the fish and wildlife account annually for public outreach related to CWD. Currently, DNR conducts public outreach to inform hunters about how and where to test harvested deer for CWD and where to dispose of deer carcasses. DNR advertises in newspapers, on the radio, and social media and translates public outreach into Spanish and Hmong. Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, DNR paid expended approximately \$41,100 on CWD outreach, on average, each year.

13. Despite current advertising, an October, 2019, Marquette University Law School Poll found that most hunters and other members of the public were misinformed on basic facts about CWD, including the extent to which the disease is expanding in the state. Given the additional need to inform the public, the Committee could consider providing DNR \$50,000 in additional expenditure authority from the fish and wildlife account for public outreach [Alternative 3]. DNR reports that funding would be used to purchase television advertisements and to better target the Department's media strategy.

14. As DNR currently operates the AAD program, it could be argued that creating a statutory grant program is unnecessary. A portion of DNR expenditures in the table above are made from a dedicated appropriation [s. 20.370(1)(hx) of the statutes] funded from \$5 of each bonus harvest authorizations in CWD areas. The appropriation had a June 30, 2020, balance of \$1.4 million. Under current law, DNR may expend from the appropriation all monies received for the management of, and testing for, chronic wasting disease. Additionally, DNR currently spends between \$33,000 and \$60,000 each year on CWD public outreach, as well as certain amounts on staffing, using existing expenditure authority. It could be argued that this is sufficient funding and that DNR can continue to allocate staffing, cost-sharing, and targeted advertising without additional funding. Under this perspective, the Committee could take no action [Alternative 4].

## ALTERNATIVES

### Deer Carcass Disposal Grants

1. Create a program administered by DNR to provide up grants to state agencies, local and tribal governments, NCOs, and businesses for to half the cost of contracting with waste disposal companies to host and haul deer carcass dumpsters. Authorize DNR to use emergency rules to develop application and administrative procedures for the program. Further, provide funding of one of the following:

a. \$1,000,000 in 2021-22 as one-time funding from the fish and wildlife account of the SEG conservation fund;

ALT 1a	Change to Base
SEG	\$1,000,000

b. \$75,000 as one-time funding from the fish and wildlife account of the SEG conservation fund in each year of the 2021-23 biennium;

ALT 1b	Change to Base
SEG	\$150,000

c. \$75,000 annually from the fish and wildlife account of the SEG conservation fund to provide ongoing funding for the deer carcass disposal grant program.

ALT 1c	Change to Base
SEG	\$150,000

2. Provide \$25,000 annually from the fish and wildlife account of the SEG conservation fund to provide funding for limited-term employee salaries and fringe benefits to administer and operate the deer carcass disposal program. (This could be selected independently or in addition to

Alternatives 1 or 3.)

<b>ALT 2</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
SEG	\$50,000

3. Provide \$50,000 annually from the fish and wildlife account of the SEG conservation fund for public outreach and marketing related to CWD. (This alternative could be selected independently or in addition to any of Alternatives 1 or 2.)

<b>ALT 3</b>	<b>Change to Base</b>
SEG	\$100,000

4. Take no action. (No Adopt-a-Dumpster program would be created in statute. DNR could continue to fund such costs under current authority.)

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