

**Georgia Department of Natural Resources Incident
Action Plan**

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Detected in Georgia



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Incident Name

Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Operational Period #

27

Op Period Dates

12-20-2025 to 1-3-2026

Distributed To

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

(For Internal Use Only)

Incident Summary Statement

On January 15, 2025, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was notified of an initial reactor screening test for a Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) sample in a hunter-killed free-ranging white-tailed deer harvested on the Berrien-Lanier county line in South-Central Georgia. The sample was then sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) for confirmation. DNR received confirmation of positive status on January 22, 2025. On January 23, DNR interviewed the hunter and confirmed the harvest location, and subsequently issued a press release confirming the first case of CWD in Georgia. On January 24, DNR held a press release to answer questions and give further details on the next steps that will be taken. A public meeting was held in the CMA on August 21, 2025. A two-county CWD Management Area (CMA) was established around the positive sample location, as well as a one-mile intensive sampling zone around the positive sample location. On 3/30, the CMA was expanded to include Lowndes County due to an initial reactor on a clinical buck within 5 miles of Lowndes County. On 12/3, DNR received notification of initial reactor test on a clinical doe in Atkinson County. The CMA was expanded to include Atkinson County. Cluster Sampling is underway. Twenty drop-off freezer locations have been established in and around the CMA. Seventy processors or taxidermists have been identified as sampling locations statewide. All WRD-GM region offices are established as sampling locations. Sampling for the 2025-26 hunting season is in progress. Since 7/1/2024, four hundred seventy-eight (478) samples have been collected in the CMA with 9 positives, 368 not detected, 100 pending, and one not tested.

Prepared by

Kevin Rose

Approved by

Organization Assignment List					
Incident Name	Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)				
Operational Period #	27				
Op Period Dates	12-20-2025 to 1-3-2026				
Incident Commander and Command Staff			Operations Section		
IC/UC's	Charlie Killmaster		Chief	Kevin Rose	
			Deputy	Alley Philson	
Technical Specialist	Dr. Jesse Maestas		Staging Area	Home Office	
Deputy	Kevin Rose		Branch		
Safety Officer			Branch Director		
Public Info. Officer	Kaitlin Goode		Deputy		
Liaison Officer			Division/Group		
			Division/Group		
Agency/Org Representatives			Division/Group		
Agency/Org			Branch		
			Branch Director		
			Deputy		
			Division/Group		
			Division/Group		
			Division/Group		
			Branch		
			Branch Director		
Planning Section			Deputy		
Chief	Kevin Rose		Division/Group		
Deputy			Division/Group		
Resources Unit			Division/Group		
Situation Unit			Branch		
Documentation Unit			Branch Director		
Demobilization Unit			Deputy		
Technical Specialists			Division/Group		
			Division/Group		
Logistics Section					
Chief	Greg Nelms				
Deputy	Drew Zellner				
Support Branch			Air Operations Branch		
Director			Director		
Supply Unit			Deputy		
Facilities Unit					
Ground Support Unit					
Service Branch			Finance Administration Section		
Director			Chief	Allison Colter	
Communications Unit			Deputy	Matt Goode	
Medical Unit			Time Unit		
Food Unit			Procurement Unit	Ciera Broadnax	
			Comp/Claims Unit		
			Cost Unit		

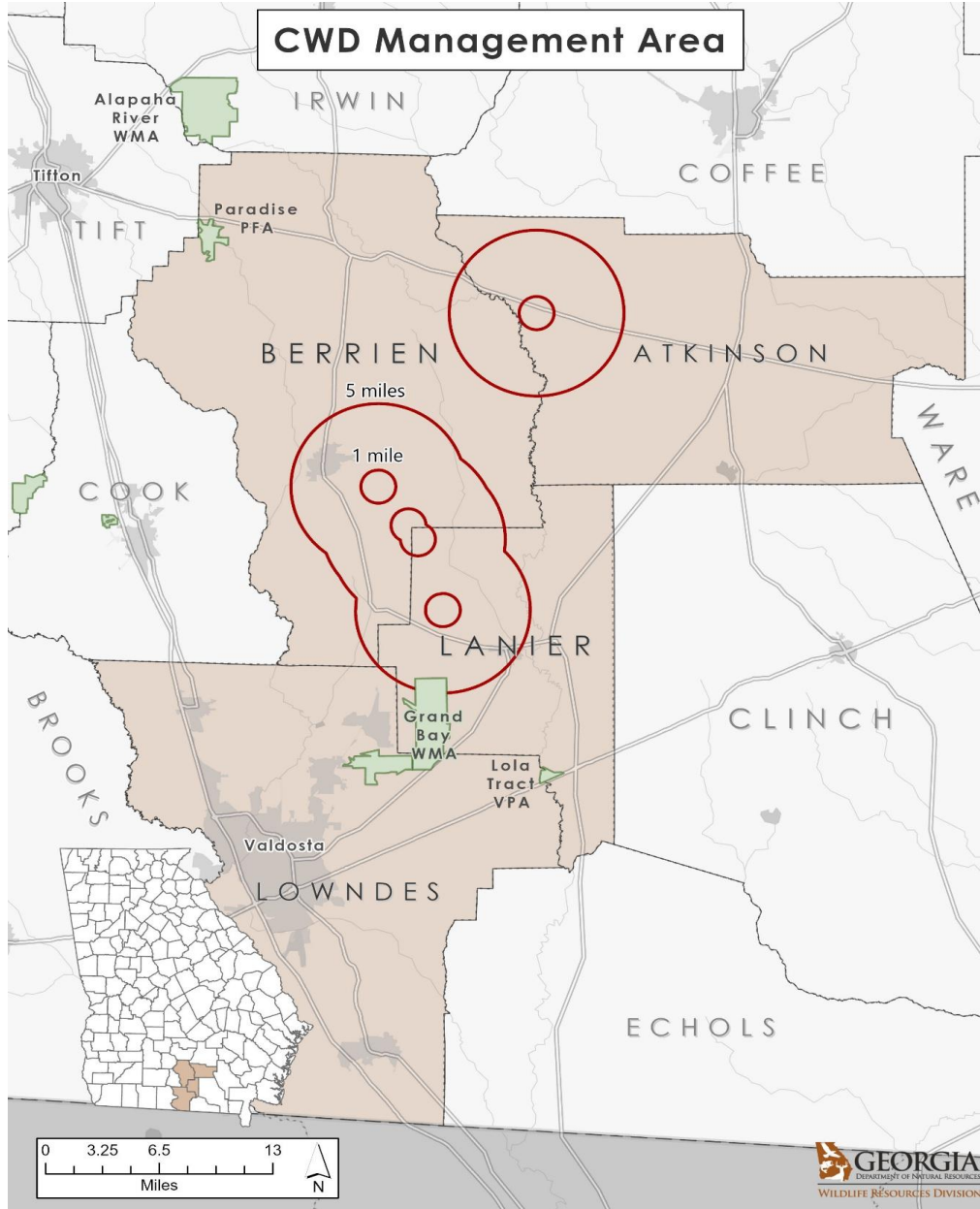
Operational Period Objectives

Incident Name Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Operational Period 27

Operational Period Dates 12-20-2025 to 1-3-2026

CWD Management Zone Map



Operational Period Objectives	
Incident Name	Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)
Operational Period	27
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Objective 1: Collect and process samples statewide Objective 2: Maintain and continue to establish CWD sampling locations statewide Objective 3: Complete internal education for front line staff prior to deer season. Objective 4: Expand CWD testing capacity at the UGA Athens Veterinary Diagnostic Lab. Objective 5: Expand CWD monitoring through environmental surveillance. Objective 6: Assess human dimensions of risk factors in the CMA and identify mitigation recommendations. Objective 7: Implement cluster sampling to manage CWD prevalence Objective 8: Utilize DMAP to increase sampling, manage deer, and build positive relationships in the CMA	

	Assignment List			
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Operations Section Chief	Kevin Rose			
Branch Director				
Divison/Group Supervisor				
Resoures Assigned				
Resource Identifier	Leader	# of Persons	Contact	Reporting Location
Work Assignments				
<u>Objective 1</u>				
Alley Philson/contractor	Continue to coordinate WRD staff and contractors to collect samples in and around CMA			
Region Staff	Continue to coordinate with processors and taxidermists in region to collect samples			
Region Staff	Continue to implement statewide surveillance per protocol			
Zach Stevens/Jesse Maestas	Assist Alley Philson with CMA sample collection			
Deer Program Staff/Jesse Maestas	Develop plan to staff 4 processors in and around the CMA Jan 10 and 11 to encourage sampling and share CWD information with the public			
Charlie Killmaster/CEO	Establish a raffle to incentivise sampling within the CMA for the remainder of the season			
<u>Objective 2</u>				
Alley Philson	Continue working with local government, municipal, taxidermists and processors to set up freezers			
Alley Philson	Establish new freezer locations in Atkinson County			
Charlie Killmaster/ Kevin Rose/CEO	Coordinate staff sample collection last weekend of deer season			
Region Staff	Maintain existing and establish additional sampling locations within each region.			
Kevin Rose	Maintain up-to-date interactive sample location map for public			
Greg Nelms/Drew Zellner	Continue to establish sample processing station at Grand Bay WMA check station by installing canopy cover for incinerator.			
<u>Objective 3</u>				
Charlie Killmaster	Schedule virtual biologist CWD training			
<u>Objective 4</u>				
Charlie Killmaster	Update contract with UGA-AVDL to purchase additional lab equipment for ELISA and RT-QuIC and			
Dr. Maestas/ Rebecca Kresin	Continue working with VetView to create database API to automate CWD test notification system.			
Charlie Killmaster	Explore opportunities with Tifton AVDL to purchase ELISA equipment for 2026-27 season.			
<u>Objective 5</u>				
Charlie Killmaster/ Alley Philson	Continue to conduct environmental surveillance on deer facilities inside CMA.			
<u>Objective 6</u>				

Charlie Killmaster/ Matt Goode	Continue coordination with UGA to implement research project
Charlie Killmaster/ Kaitlin Goode	Develop and implement educational campaign on CWD risk factors and management.
	<u>Objective 7</u>
Alley Philson/ Dr. Maestas/ Zach Stevens	Cluster sample 5 deer around each known positive by authorizing landowner/hunter to collect deer with limited restrictions
Zach Stevens	Assess status of all cluster sampling actions and continue to encourage sampling
	<u>Objective 8</u>
Kevin Rose	Onboard (12/22) and train National Deer Association CWD DMAP Biologist, Cole Corley
Special Instructions	
N/A	

Communications List			
Incident Name	Georgia Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)		
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Divison/Section/Group	Position Assigned	Name	Method of Contact
N/A			

Incident Accomplishments

Initial Field Response

The Operations team has been contacting landowners within a 1-mile radius of the positive sample site to inform them of the CWD positive sample, and to work with them to gain additional samples to determine CWD prevalence via landowner permit. Field staff have also collected samples from processor and taxidermists, road-killed deer, and sick deer within the CMA.

Table 1. Summary of CWD samples within the CMA since 7/1/2024

County	Detected	Not Detected	Not tested*	Pending	Grand Total
Atkinson	1	7	1	8	17
Berrien	3	183		53	239
Lanier	5	78		17	100
Lowndes		100		22	122
Grand Total	9	368	1	100	478

* Sample not viable

Table 2. Summary of CWD positive detections and cluster sampling

Deer #	City/County	Landowner	Hunter Harvest or Disease Suspect	Collection Date	Date Confirmed	# Deer harvested in Cluster Sampling	NVSL Status	Notes
R6G1114	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	12/2/2024	1/22/2025	5	Confirmed	Index Case
R6G1385	Berrien		Cluster Sampling	3/12/2025	4/18/2025	4	Confirmed	
DM1174	Lanier		Clinical	9/24/2025	10/9/2025	5	Confirmed	W/in 5 miles of Lowndes
253009	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	10/9/2025	10/30/2025	1	Confirmed	Adjacent to DM1174
253010	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	10/9/2025	10/30/2025	0	Confirmed	Adjacent to DM1174
253066	Berrien		Hunter Harvest	10/23/2025	11/10/2025	0	Confirmed	Contacted 12/9 to encourage sampling
253069	Berrien		Hunter Harvest	10/23/2025	11/10/2025	0	Confirmed	
253590	Lanier		Hunter Harvest	11/10/2025	12/8/2025	0	Confirmed	Contacted 12/9 to encourage sampling
253651	Atkinson		Clinical	11/14/2025		0	Pending	Working with USDA for cluster sampling

CWD Freezer Locations

Business Name	Address	City	County
Banks Lake Outdoors	307 Ga-122	Lakeland	Lanier
Lanier Forestry Commission	Next to 168 N Brantley St	Lakeland	Lanier
Hunt's Deer Processing	79 Bolling Ln	Ray City	Lanier
Berrien Forestry Commission	13836 Co Rd 129	Nashville	Berrien
Ford's Taxidermy	520 Jn Ford Rd	Nashville	Berrien
Owen Farm Deer Processing	366 Junebug Lane	Alapaha	Berrien
Enigma Fire Department	324 S Main St	Enigma	Berrien
Tattooed Butcher 'Wild Game Cuts' LLC	969 Fire Tower Road	Enigma	Berrien
Henderson deer processing	256 Corbitt Rd	Homerville	Clinch
Lowndes County Forestry Unit	3011 US-84	Valdosta	Lowndes

K&K Deer Processing	6749 Good Hope Rd	Naylor	Lowndes
Bullard Deer Processing	6980 Val Del Road	Adel	Cook
Anchor Outdoors	607 West Central Ave	Lenox	Cook
Kirk's Meats and Processing	329 Green Lantern Road	Nicholls	Coffee
Paradise PFA	539 Paradise Drive	Enigma	Berrien
From the Fields Meat and Processing	147 Ridge Ave South	Tifton	Tift
Echols County Forestry Commission	Forestry St	Statenville	Echols
Atkinson County Forestry Commission	39 Dan Spikes Rd	Pearson	Atkinson
Lees Meat Processing	461 Dove Lane	Axson	Atkinson
Langboard	548 Langboard Rd	Willacoochee	Atkinson

Completed Actions

Sampling contractor hired for collecting samples from crop permit holders.

Freezers, supplies, and decals for sampling sites recieved.

Statewide deer carcass disposal rule implemented.

Contracted with UGA to develop a research project to assess CWD risk factors before and after educational campaign.

Secured necessary funds to implement FY26 to fund disease management and monitoring.

Completed and distributed fawn rehabber guidance on handling fawns from CMA.

Scheduled in person (Aug 21) and virtual (Aug 26) meetings for taxidermists and processors.

Scheduled in person public meeting in CMA for Aug 21.

Scheduled virtual meeting for DNR staff for Aug 14.

Statewide CWD sampling progress dashboard for public created.

Developed talking points for Game Wardens and WRD staff.

Created online dashboard for public to look up CWD test results.

Deer Program staff attended Region LED meetings for CWD Q&A.

Created online interactive map of sampling locations for website

Created CWD website/QR code business cards and distribute to front line staff

Created informational handouts for taxidermists and processors.

Created informational placards for hunters that businesses can post.

In person public meeting for taxidermists and processors in and around CMA held on Aug 21.

In person meeting for general public in and around CMA held Aug 21

Created plan to monitor sampling sites, transport heads to Grand Bay, and transport samples to lab.

Statewide taxidermists and processors virtual meeting held Aug 26

Incinerator installed at Grand Bay

Conducted environmental surveillance on deer facilities in

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services identified as federal partner to assist with cluster sampling when required

CMA Sampling Sites Schedule

Friday through Monday - Collect heads from freezers/taxidermists/processors and thaw

Monday - Thaw heads for sampling

Tuesday - Pull samples, incinerate heads

Wednesday - Data entry for Survey123, prepare samples for transport

Thursday - Transport samples to lab

Communications Accomplishments

[Press Release outlining confirmation of first positive case of CWD in Georgia 01/23/2025](#)

[Wildlife Resources Division's Updated CWD Webpage](#)

Board of Natural Resources updated 01/24/2025

Press Conference 01/24/2025

Social Media Posts created & shared by DNR-WRD and GA DNR Accounts

Staff Guidance and FAQs created and shared with all DNR staff

CWD informational presentation & Q&A presented to DNR staff 1/24/2025

[Georgia House Game, Fish and Parks Committee Briefing 1/27/2025](#)

[Georgia Senate Natural Resources and the Environment Committee Briefing 1/27/2025](#)

Held 4 Public Information Sessions:

Adel, Ga 2/4/2025 - 45 attendees

[Virtual 2/6/2025 - approximately 10,000 views as of 2/11/25](#)

Lakeland, GA 2/8/2025 - 33 attendees

Valdosta, GA 2/8/2025 - 7 attendees

Press Release confirming 2nd CWD positive deer 4/22/25

Held processor and taxidermist meeting in CMA 8/21/2025 - 20 attendees

Held public information session in CMA 8/21/2025 - 33 attendees

Held virtual taxidermist and processor meeting 8/26/25

Archery season press release 9/4/25

Push notification to hunters in CMA and surrounding counties leading up to peak harvest weekends

Executive Orders/Regulations

Statewide deer carcass disposal rule implemented. No regulation changes required or proposed for CMA counties.

Safety Message

MAJOR HAZARDS AND RISKS COLLECTING CWD SAMPLES:

- **GENERAL HEALTH**
- **SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**
- **SAFETY BEFORE WORKING**
- **SAFETY WHILE WORKING**
- **SAFETY WHILE TRAVELING**

GENERAL HEALTH

Avoid accidental contamination

Always carry and use water, soap, and/or hand sanitizer to clean hands after collecting samples

Monitor your fatigue level—risk of mistakes and contamination increases with tiredness.

Clean area and tools with dilute bleach solution (40%) when finished

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Assume all deer are contaminated – deer carry multiple diseases harmful to humans

Do not cut into a heavily bloated or decomposed deer

Exercise caution when using sharp blades or tools.

Stay alert and cautious when working near roadways

Collect samples outside or in a well-ventilated room

SAFETY BEFORE WORKING

Confirm you have all necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before starting

Check that all PPE is functional and in good condition

SAFETY WHILE WORKING

Carry appropriate PPE for all scenarios (roadside sampling, carcass handling, blade use)

Ensure safe visibility when collecting samples along roadways:

If the carcass is near a curve, park in a visible, straight section and walk to the location.

Use vehicle flashers when parked roadside

Wear high-visibility clothing when working near traffic.

Report any incidents or accidental exposure to your supervisor immediately.

SAFETY WHILE TRAVELING

Use extra caution at night—visibility is reduced, and sight distance is limited.

Inform someone of your destination and expected return time.

Verify your planned route is open, safe, and accessible.

Watch out for distracted drivers and moving traffic.

Park only in safe, visible locations—avoid curves or blind spots.

Always wear your seatbelt.

REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

High-visibility gear: Vest and/or shirt when near roadways.

Eye protection: Safety glasses or goggles during sample collection.

Face Mask/shield: Disposable surgical mask or face shield to protect from splash and aerosolized particles

Gloves (Disposable): Nitrile gloves for handling biological material – double glove. Remove outer glove to provide a clean hand to take notes/pictures and to reduce contamination of equipment

Gloves (Utility): Leather gloves for handling tools or around sharp broken bones

Sharp Blade: Dull blades are more likely to cut you, replace/sharpen often

Blade removing tool: Leatherman, pliers, needle holder

Sharps Container: For proper disposal of used or contaminated blades.

Face Mask/shield: Disposable surgical mask or face shield to protect from splash and aerosolized particles

Forceps: Grab samples with forceps and cut, holding with fingers increases risk of getting cut

General		
N/A		
Prepared by	Kevin Rose	Planning Section
Approved by		