

Respond to Wildlife Disease



**2025-27 Operating Budget
Funding Request
\$3.7 million**



Diseases can significantly impact wildlife populations, and sick wildlife are often an early warning of diseases that can affect domestic animals and humans. Examples of wildlife diseases with significant impacts on wildlife populations include rabbit hemorrhagic disease, white-nose syndrome in bats, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI or “bird flu”), and chronic wasting disease (CWD).

Impacts from wildlife diseases can also significantly affect human communities, economies, and cultural and natural heritage. Examples include changes to conservation or protected status, closure of recreational areas, and reduced hunting opportunity and resulting loss of visitation and tourism to rural areas.

Early detection and response to wildlife diseases enhances the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) capacity to mitigate wildlife impacts and implement proactive strategies to help ensure healthy wildlife populations.

Proactive disease surveillance provides early warnings and opportunities for intervention, before significant sickness, death, and population declines occur, or diseases become endemic (established and widespread within an affected population).

CWD was confirmed for the first time in Washington in July 2024. This detection was a direct result of increased systematic surveillance for the early detection of CWD that was funded by the Washington State Legislature in 2022. Early detection is critical for the management of CWD so that actions can be quickly implemented to prevent the disease from becoming endemic.

This added capacity will continue to expand efforts for wildlife disease detection and prevention in Washington by enabling WDFW to provide detailed wildlife health action plans for priority diseases before they are detected within the state.

It will also allow WDFW to implement and maintain the emergency CWD response plan, to expand staff resources, increase disease surveillance and sample collection, increase presence and frequency of check stations (stations where hunters can provide biologists with important biological information to test for CWD), implement planned management actions, and increase outreach.

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