

Summary

Meeting dates: June 7-8, 2013

Agenda item 13: Update on Hoof Disease in Southwest Washington

Presenter(s): Nate Pamplin, Assistant Director, Wildlife
Kristin Mansfield, WDFW Veterinarian

Background summary:

Reports of lameness and deformed hooves in free-ranging Roosevelt elk have been observed in southwest Washington since the mid 1990's. This problem seems concentrated in the lowlands in the lower Cowlitz River Valley, but reports have been increasing in number and geographic scope, and hunters are regularly seeing and sometimes harvesting an elk with this condition. At times, many individuals in an elk herd or groups are limping and showing signs of this malady. It has been noted in both males and females; old as well as very young animals, and in any hoof.

One of the challenges in understanding hoof disease in animal populations is that there are over 40 types of hoof diseases of domestic ruminants that are known. The type observed in southwest Washington elk does not appear to match with any known hoof diseases in domestic or wild animals and does not seem to be affecting domestic livestock in the area.

In an effort to better characterize the problem and identify possible causes, WDFW biologists and veterinary staff have been working with veterinary experts throughout the country, and abroad, to develop sampling and testing plans for identifying the causes and effects of the hoof disease phenomenon seen in southwest Washington elk herds. Based on a study design developed with researchers and clinicians at the WSU College of Veterinary Medicine, samples were collected in 2013 and sent to the veterinary diagnostic laboratories at WSU, Colorado State University, University of Wyoming, USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratory, and the University of Liverpool for a variety of tests in order to identify the cause of hoof disease in southwest Washington elk.

We expect that this additional effort will provide further information and insight to the issue of hoof disease in southwest Washington and guide future management efforts. Understanding which type of hoof disease is present and what the possible cause may be will provide a better understanding of how it is occurring, and this is an important step in understanding and managing its impacts.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

N/A

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

WDFW staff held a public meeting 17 September 2012 and developed a WDFW web-page and Hoof Disease Reporting Tool. This information provides an understanding of the distribution of hoof disease as well as the concerns from the public regarding this disease. WDFW will also be establishing a Public Task Force to provide a forum for information exchange and public outreach as this situation evolves.

Action requested:

N/A

Draft motion language:

N/A

Justification for Commission action:

N/A

Communications Plan:

Once we have received all the results from our recent collections, our intent is to summarize, analyze, and share them with all interested parties, including hunters, meat processors, and public health and agriculture agencies. Besides for communication through the task force, outreach efforts will also include working with Department of Health to provide information and advice on the safety of handling and consuming the meat from affected animals.