

# High despite disease during last winter



Three deer stand next to the highway in Northwest Kansas. The number of deer in this part of the state have stayed steady with last year's population.

— Photo by Jim Merriott/ The Oberlin Herald

Although a lot of deer are killed in motor vehicle accidents, he said, they account for only a small portion of deer mortality and have little effect on numbers. Mr. Fox said the biggest factor in deer mortality is hunting.

People think vehicle accidents could be a large factor, said Mr. Fox, because they see the roadkill, but there aren't enough accidents to control the deer population.

## found twice in Kansas

and shoulder blades visible, a vacant stare that appears as if the animal is in a stupor with an abnormal response to normal stimuli, depression manifested with the animal's head and ears held low, nervous disorders — trembles, twitches, shakes, or walks in repeated patterns — and a poor coat.

Other visible characteristics include the hair along the spine standing erect and not flat, an enlarged abdomen filled with fluid and the animal may drool or grind its teeth.

"Deer and elk may suffer from a variety of injuries and other illnesses that produce symptoms exactly like these," Bain said. "The only way to be sure if an animal has chronic wasting disease is to submit appropriate samples from that animal to an approved veterinary diagnostic lab for testing."

If someone locates an animal with these symptoms, they should call Bain (785) 462-3367.

Hunters who would like to have their deer tested for this disease, Bain said, can leave samples with contractors in the area for testing.

Hunters won't know if the deer or elk they bagged has the disease until after they have provided their sample and the animal tests positive.

In addition, Bain said, there are some important things hunters can do to protect the state's deer population.

Those include:

- Promptly reporting any deer with the late-stage symptoms to a wildlife officer or department office.
- Cooperate with voluntary sample collections and provide information about your deer.
- Bury waste from your deer or dispose of it in an approved landfill.
- Do not unnecessarily transport carcasses, except for meat, cape, and antlers.

Bain said, thus far no connection has been documented between this disease and any illnesses in livestock, pets or humans.

"Chronic wasting disease is similar to mad cow disease and scabies (in sheep and goats)," he said, "so caution is encouraged because of unknown factors associated with prion diseases."

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