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COVID-19

PRECAUTIONS FOR HANDLING AND PROCESSING DEER

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The SARS-CoV-2 virus, that causes COVID-19 in humans, has been detected in wild white-tailed deer in Iowa and Ohio. Some states began testing live deer following initial work by the US Department of Agriculture that confirmed the susceptibility of captive deer to the virus and still other research that detected antibodies to the virus in wild deer in Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania. So far, COVID testing in wild deer has been limited to only a few states, but increased testing is occurring locally and nationally.

What we know about COVID-19 and deer as of December 2021:

- Deer are susceptible to the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19.
- Wild deer have been infected with the virus in multiple US states.
- SARS-CoV-2 deer infections appear to be occurring as spillovers from outbreaks in local human populations.
- Deer to deer transmission can occur between captive deer and is suspected in the wild.
- Deer shed infectious SARS-CoV-2 virus through nasal secretions and feces for up to seven days following infection.
- Deer do not develop symptoms to the virus (according to preliminary research).



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Can deer transmit COVID-19 to people?

It has not yet been confirmed whether deer can transmit the virus to humans, however, there has been little research done to assess this risk. To reduce risk, public health and wildlife officials recommend practicing these basic measures when handling and processing deer.

Recommended deer safe handling precautions:

- Do not eat any deer that appears sick.
- Do not eat the eyes, brain, spinal cord, spleen, tonsils or lymph nodes of any deer.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves when handling your harvest and wash your hands afterward.
- Minimize contact with the brain, spinal cord, spleen and lymph nodes.
- Minimize contact with the respiratory tract, which includes the lungs, trachea, and mouth and nasal cavities.
- Clean knives and equipment of residue and disinfect with a 50/50 solution of household chlorine bleach and water.

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be contracted through food consumption, including venison. As always, hunters should practice safe venison handling precautions; raw meat should be stored at or below 40°F and cooked to at least 165°F before consumption.

