



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## CWD Postmortem Testing

Updated as of March 2021

### 1. What is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) postmortem testing?

CWD postmortem testing is conducted after an animal's death to detect abnormal prion protein, the suspected causative agent of CWD, in the retropharyngeal lymph nodes and obex of the animal.

### 2. Who is authorized to collect and submit samples for postmortem CWD testing?

Only a TAHC Authorized Veterinarian or a TAHC Certified CWD Postmortem Sample Collector may collect and submit samples for postmortem testing. To become a certified CWD postmortem sample collector or to find a certified collector, visit [www.tahc.texas.gov/animal\\_health/elk-deer/#cwdauthorized](http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/elk-deer/#cwdauthorized).

### 3. What postmortem CWD testing options are available from the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab (TVMDL)?

- Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) on fresh or frozen samples of retropharyngeal lymph nodes and/or obex; and
- Immunohistochemistry (IHC) on retropharyngeal lymph nodes and/or obex fixed in 10% formalin.

### 4. What are the differences between the ELISA and the IHC for postmortem CWD testing?

ELISA	IHC
TVMDL Cost - \$30 for both tissues	TVMDL Cost - \$45 for both tissues
Turnaround time is 2-3 days, but can be longer due to high demand	Turnaround time is 7-10 days, but can be longer due to high demand
Fresh or frozen sample	Formalin fixed sample
Ship overnight on cold packs	Ship at room temperature

### 5. What special instructions should be followed when submitting samples for postmortem CWD testing?

- Facilities enrolled in the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) CWD Herd Certification program must submit both retropharyngeal lymph nodes and obex from all animals sent for testing.
- All samples submitted to TVMDL from herds under a TAHC CWD Herd Plan or enrolled in the USDA Herd Certification Program must be submitted formalin fixed for IHC.
- All samples submitted to TVMDL from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) permitted deer breeding facilities, including those enrolled in the TAHC CWD Herd Certification program, and Class II or Class III breeder deer release sites, must be accompanied by the appropriate TVMDL submission form accessible only through the facility TPWD/TWIMS (Texas Wildlife Information Management Services) account.
- All samples submitted to TVMDL from exotic CWD susceptible species must be accompanied by an exotic CWD susceptible species test submission form accessible from the TAHC website.
- Elk may be tested with ELISA unless they are under a TAHC CWD Herd Plan or enrolled in the USDA Herd Certification Program.



- Fresh or frozen samples for ELISA testing should be sent to TVMDL as quickly as possible after sample collection. If not sent overnight on the day of collection, it is imperative to keep the samples chilled until shipped, which should be no later than five (5) days after collection.
- CWD ELISA samples that have been frozen should be removed from the freezer, transferred directly to an insulated shipping container with enough cold packs to keep the sample frozen, and shipped overnight. Repeated thawing and freezing may render the sample untestable.

## 6. What happens at TVMDL if a sample submitted for postmortem CWD testing has a “suspect” positive test result?

- All tissues from a “suspect” positive ELISA test will be confirmed by IHC at TVMDL.
- All tissues from a “suspect” positive IHC test will be sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) in Ames, IA for confirmatory IHC testing.
- Upon identification of a “suspect” positive CWD test result, TVMDL will notify the TAHC State Veterinarian and TPWD. TVMDL will also notify the individual who submitted the sample.

## 7. What happens at TAHC if a sample submitted for postmortem CWD testing has a “suspect” positive test result?

Upon notification from the TAHC State Veterinarian, the TAHC Region Director will work with TPWD to notify the producer. TAHC will issue a hold order on the facility with the “suspect” positive test result requiring all CWD susceptible species to remain on the premises. The hold order will remain in place until confirmatory IHC testing has been completed and reported. If it is determined upon further testing that the “suspect” sample is not a confirmed positive, the producer will be notified that the hold order is being released.

## 8. What happens at TPWD if a sample submitted for postmortem CWD testing has a “suspect” positive test result?

In accordance with [Title 31 Texas Administrative Code §65.94](#), “immediately upon the notification that a facility has received a CWD “suspect” test result (a CWD suspect facility), all facilities that have been in possession of a deer that was held in the CWD suspect facility within the previous five years shall be designated Not Movement Qualified (NMQ) by the department until it is determined that the facility is not epidemiologically linked to the CWD suspect deer, or it is determined upon further testing at NVSL that the “suspect” deer is not a confirmed positive.”

### Resource Links:

- TAHC CWD Webpage: [https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal\\_health/elk-deer](https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/elk-deer)
- TVMDL Testing Options and Instructions:
  - CWD (IHC): <https://tvmdl.tamu.edu/tests/chronic-wasting-disease-ihc/>
  - CWD – 1 Tissue (ELISA): <https://tvmdl.tamu.edu/tests/chronic-wasting-disease-1-tissue-elisa/>
  - CWD - 2 Tissues (ELISA): <https://tvmdl.tamu.edu/tests/chronic-wasting-disease-2-tissues-elisa/>