

Report Confirms Regional Deer Deaths from Blue Tongue

(KAIR) -- The high number of deer discovered dead within a large portion of the region last year has been explained by the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Department.

A total of 1,274 deer were suspected of having Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease or Blue Tongue in Kansas in 2012, and although considered to be one of the worst outbreaks in the state, data suggests that this disease had "patchy" impacts on populations within deer management units.

Seventeen deer from 16 counties were diagnosed with Blue Tongue in 2012, with 16 of the deer being EHDV-2 positive and one deer being EHDV-1 positive.

Sick or dead deer found during the outbreak that exhibited symptoms or signs suggestive of Blue Tongue were designated as suspects and counted, making the total count 1,274, including the ones that were tested.

Of the 16 counties with confirmed cases of EHD-infected deer in 2012 included Anderson, Atchison, Doniphan, Jackson, Jefferson, Leavenworth, and Marshall Counties.

To put Kansas Blue Tongue mortality rates into perspective, surrounding states reported the total deaths from Blue Tongue in 2012 in Illinois – 2,925; Iowa – 2,974; Nebraska – 5,998; Missouri – 10,177.

Despite the high mortality rate associated with this disease, deer populations typically recover within a few years following Blue Tongue die-offs.

The deer population in eastern Kansas continues to be robust and "gaps" left by Blue Tongue will quickly fill in with deer moving in from adjacent, less affected areas.

Although the viral cause of Blue Tongue was not discovered until the late-1950s, reports of die-offs consistent with Blue Tongue date back to the 1890s.

Blue Tongue is an acute, infectious, viral disease transmitted between animals by biting midges. It typically occurs in late summer and fall and is thought to be consistent with periods of biting midge abundance.

Freezing temperatures usually greatly reduce these populations, bringing a sudden end to outbreaks; however active midge populations have been reported during winter in more mild climates.

Deer infected with Blue Tongue suffer from dehydration and high fever, causing them to seek water. Consequently, most deer that have fallen victim to this disease are found near the edges of rivers, ditches, and marshes.

There is no known effective treatment or control for Blue Tongue.

Other wildlife species in Kansas, such as mule deer, elk, and pronghorn, can also be infected with Blue Tongue virus but are less susceptible to the disease.

Many Signals Communications