

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Hemorrhagic disease in Western North Carolina

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission wants your help.

Commission biologists noticed an unusually high number of cases of hemorrhagic disease in white-tailed deer in Wilkes and Surry counties, and are asking the public to report sightings of sick or diseased animals.

Hemorrhagic disease has no human health implications but is a serious white-tailed deer disease. Symptoms vary widely, but can include bloating, weakness, and weight loss. Infected deer may have foot, mouth and internal lesions. High fever associated with the disease can make deer thirsty, so dead and dying deer are often found near water.

Reporting sightings allows Commission biologists to determine what areas of the state are experiencing outbreaks and the extent of those outbreaks. It also gives biologists opportunities to obtain tissue and blood samples for virus isolation by veterinarians at the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study in Athens, Ga. Reported occurrences are summarized annually and sent to the Southeastern Cooperative where the occurrence and outbreak extent is monitored collectively for all states. In years with severe hemorrhagic disease outbreaks, deer mortality reached 30 percent of the local herd in some areas.

To report sightings of symptomatic deer, or dead and dying deer, contact the Division of Wildlife Management at 919-707-0050.

Because the disease cannot spread to humans, hunters should not worry about dressing deer or eating venison. Deer that recover from an episode of hemorrhagic disease develop immunity to future outbreaks.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.