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**Use Genetics to Fight CWD, Editorial Asserts**

*Smarter hunting and breeding could end disease*

**Madison (December 31, 2003)**— Figuring out which deer have a natural resistance to Chronic Wasting Disease could be the key to eventually eliminating it from the deer population, say the co-authors of an editorial published in the latest issue of the *Wisconsin Medical Journal*.

“By focusing on what is known about the genetic factors involved in CWD and other known prion diseases, new methods for population risk assessment and elimination of the disease from deer...may be developed,” write Deanna Cross, PhD and James K. Burmester, PhD, both with the Marshfield Medical Research Foundation.

They assert that one phase of CWD management should be to determine through blood tests, genetic differences between deer that are affected by the disease and those that are not. “If a link were established between genetics and resistance, then a sampling of deer within natural geographic boundaries or confined deer herds would identify populations with increased susceptibility to CWD,” they explain.

With that information, Cross and Burmester say an intensive buck hunt could take place in a region in need of “genetic improvement,” while resource managers raise “genetically resistant bucks” to boost the healthy deer population.

“By paying attention to the genetic susceptibility of individuals and populations to prion diseases, the reduction and elimination of CWD may be achievable,” the authors conclude.

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