



# Wisconsin Medical Society

Your Doctor. Your Health.

**For Immediate Release**

**For Information Contact:**

**Steve Busalacchi**

**(608) 442-3746/800-762-8977**

**Cell (608) 576-2274**

**[Steveb@wismed.org](mailto:Steveb@wismed.org)**

## **Human CWD Risk Uncertain**

*Wisconsin Medical Society task force releases CWD recommendations to hunters, state*

**(Interview availability between 8:00-11:00 a.m. Thursday)**

**Madison (October 24, 2002)** – More evidence is necessary before we will know if chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a human health threat, according to a Wisconsin Medical Society report released today. (The task force report can be found on [www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org](http://www.wisconsinmedicalsociety.org)).

“There is currently no scientific or epidemiological evidence to suggest that CWD can be transmitted to humans,” says the report, which was approved by the Society’s Board of Directors October 12. “But...with a long latency period, the final answer will remain uncertain until more data are developed,” finds the Chronic Wasting Disease Task Force.

With that in mind, the Wisconsin Medical Society recommends hunters carefully observe deer for signs of the disease. “Signs identified in captive deer include excessive salivation, loss of appetite, progressive weight loss, excessive thirst...holding the head in a lowered position,

and drooping ears,” the task force reports. The authors recommend basing a decision to eat the meat on how many CWD deer have been identified in the area.

Other recommendations to hunters include, field dressing and butchering the deer with a disposable knife, using latex gloves.

In recommendations to the state, the CWD task force suggests, “licensing all meat processors who butcher venison to ensure they are aware of and following proper venison butchering procedures,” issue clear instructions to hunters, meat processors and others on safe handling and processing of wild venison, and mandate the reporting of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, a human disease with similarities to CWD.

“Laboratory tests for CWD can definitely prove that a deer has CWD, but cannot prove that it does not have CWD in some pre-detectable stage, and therefore, the test is not a food safety test,” the task force concludes.

William Scheckler, MD, Chair of the Wisconsin Medical Society’s CWD Task Force, will be available for questions between 8:00-11:00 a.m. on Thursday (Contact Drew Kasel at 608-442-3747). Doctor Scheckler is a specialist in infectious disease, epidemiology and internal medicine, and is a family medicine professor at UW Madison.

The Wisconsin Medical Society is the largest association of medical doctors in the state with more than 9,500 members dedicated to the best interests of their patients. With that in mind, [Wisconsinmedicalsociety.org](http://Wisconsinmedicalsociety.org) offers patients a unique source for reliable, physician-reviewed medical information. The Wisconsin Medical Society, a trusted source for health policy leadership since 1841. Your Doctor. Your Health.

xxx