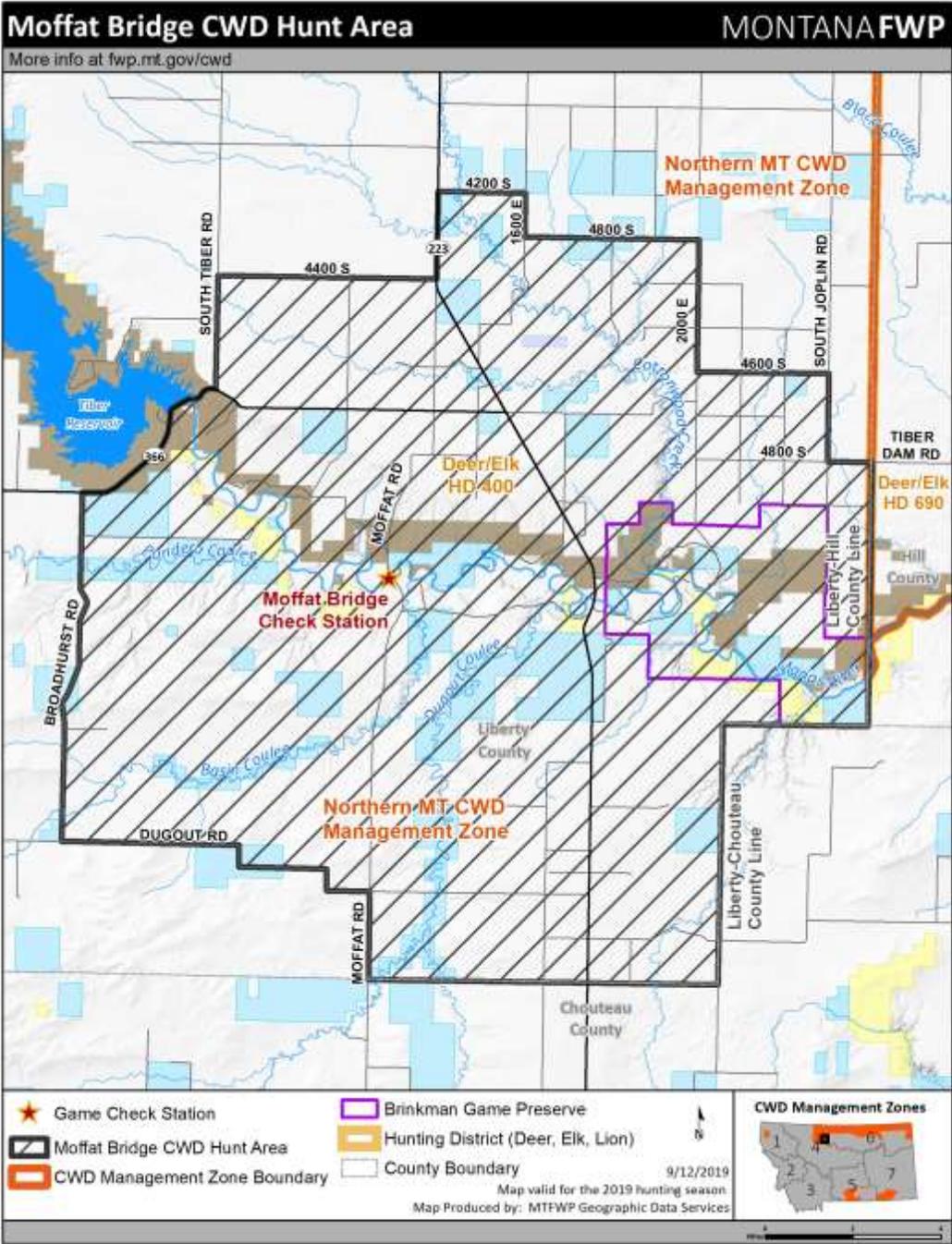


Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Summary Report



Ryan L. Rauscher
 Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 Conrad Field Office
 4/6/2020

Summary

During the 2018 General Season, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was detected in tissue samples collected from a white-tailed buck harvested in HD 400 in southern Liberty County near Moffat Bridge. In accordance with the Montana CWD Management Plan (2018), a special CWD Hunt was conducted concurrent with the 2019 general season. One hundred fifty-five mule deer and 18 white-tailed deer harvested in the Special Hunt Area were sampled at the Moffat Bridge CWD Check Station in the 2019 season. One additional mule deer buck tested positive for CWD. Prevalence in the Moffat Bridge CWD Hunt Area is estimated at 1% (95% CI: 0 – 3%, 162) for mule deer and 5% (95% CI: 1 – 22%, 22) for white-tailed deer.

Introduction

During the 2018 general season, CWD was detected in tissue samples collected from a white-tailed buck harvested in T29N, R6E, Sec 17 in HD 400 in southern Liberty County near Moffat Bridge (Figure 1.). The initial response to a CWD detection as outlined in Montana's CWD Management Plan (2018) is to determine the prevalence and distribution of the disease among all cervid species within a 10-mile radius of the positive harvest location, mule deer and white-tailed deer in this case. Following this detection, additional mule and white-tailed deer tissue samples from HD 400 were collected from hunter harvested animals at check stations in Chester, Shelby, a temporary check station north of Fort Benton and field staff on routine and special patrols during the remaining 2018 season. Insufficient samples were collected to determine prevalence at the hunting district or potential Initial Response Area level. Therefore, to determine prevalence and subsequent long-term management strategies, a Special CWD Hunt was conducted concurrent with the 2019 general season.

Initial Response Area – Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area

The boundary of the Initial Response Area known as the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area was determined by drawing a 10-mile radius around the original CWD detection. Geographic and political boundaries, primarily roads and county lines, were used to define the hunt area (Figure 2.) The Brinkman Game Preserve was included in the hunt area. Deer hunting with firearms within the Brinkman Game Preserve was allowed during the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt only. The legal description is given in Appendix A.

Deer Population Estimates

To determine the required sample size to estimate prevalence, an aerial survey of mule deer habitat within the Moffat Bridge Special Hunt Area was conducted on 1/13/2019 (Figure 3.) as most of the area is outside normal deer trend areas. A total of 487 mule deer (70 bucks and 417 antlerless) and 37 white-tailed deer (20 bucks and 17 antlerless) were observed. Deer were classified only to antlered or antlerless to determine gender-based sample sizes.

It is likely deer populations are considerably higher than the number of deer observed during this survey because the survey was conducted post-season (after deer were harvested during the 2018 season), significant public hunter access within the hunt area, survey conditions were less than ideal, the entire area was not surveyed due to fuel considerations, and an unknown observability of deer. However, given the inverse relationship between population size and desired sample size once the estimated population size approaches 500, there is only a small increase in the number of samples needed to achieve desired precision of the prevalence estimate. Therefore, the observed number of deer was used for sample size determination.

Using guidelines in the CWD Plan, a total of 25 mule deer bucks and 120 mule deer doe samples were needed for the desired level of confidence of the prevalence estimate. Given the low number of white-tailed deer observed and existing LPTs (License Permit Types) specifying white-tailed deer specific CWD B licenses was not needed.

Licenses

The Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt was held concurrent with the HD 400 3-week 2019 general season, (Oct. 26 – Nov. 17) to collect samples from deer harvested with existing deer LPTs, i.e. general deer license, LPT 004-00 OTC antlerless white-tailed deer license and, LPT 400-00 antlerless mule deer license. This was done to minimize negative impacts to deer populations by only collecting the needed number of samples from a special CWD hunt conducted outside the established 3-week general season as was done with the Sage Creek Special CWD Hunt held in HD 401 in January 2018.

However, to ensure sufficient samples were collected, Moffat Bridge CWD Special Hunt B Licenses, 50 either-sex mule deer B Licenses and 300 antlerless mule deer B Licenses, were made available on a first come first serve basis from license vendors in Chester, Shelby, Conrad, Fort Benton and the FWP Region 4 Office in Great Falls beginning at 8:00 AM on September 23, 2019. The intent of making licenses available only at local vendors was to allow local hunters the first opportunity to purchase these licenses. Licenses were made available for online sales and elsewhere at 10:00AM. These licenses were valid only within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt boundary from Oct 26 – Dec 1.

The number of licenses needed was determined by using B license success rates from previous special CWD hunts and general B license success rates.

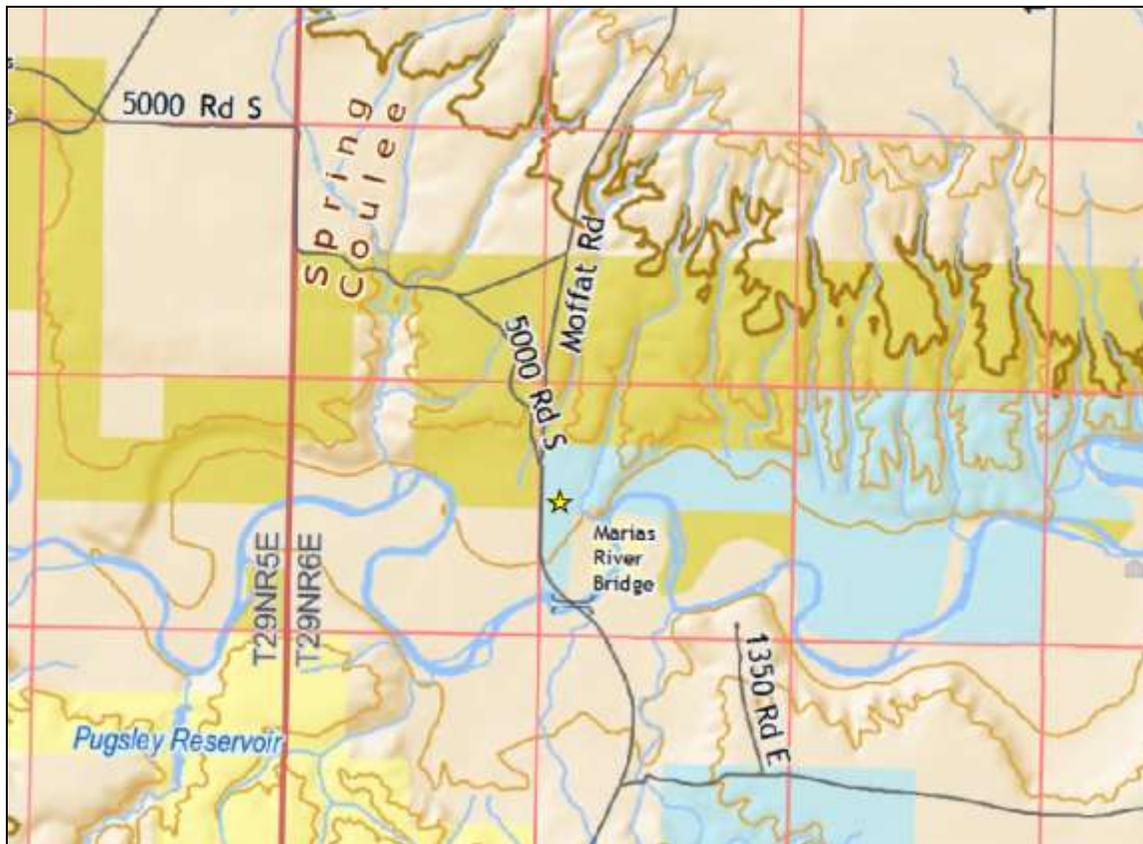


Figure 1. Location of CWD positive white-tailed deer (Yellow Star), November 2018.

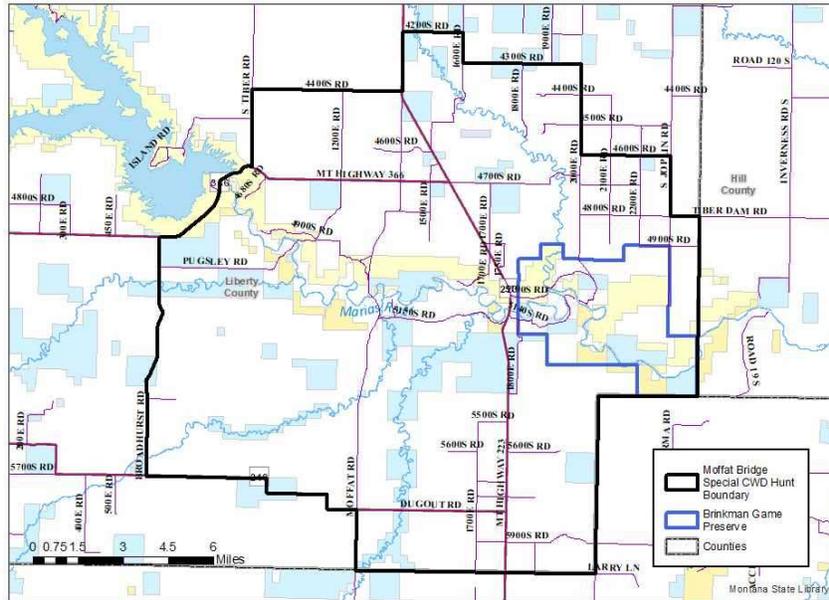


Figure 2. Moffat Bridge Initial Response Area, (Hunt Boundary).

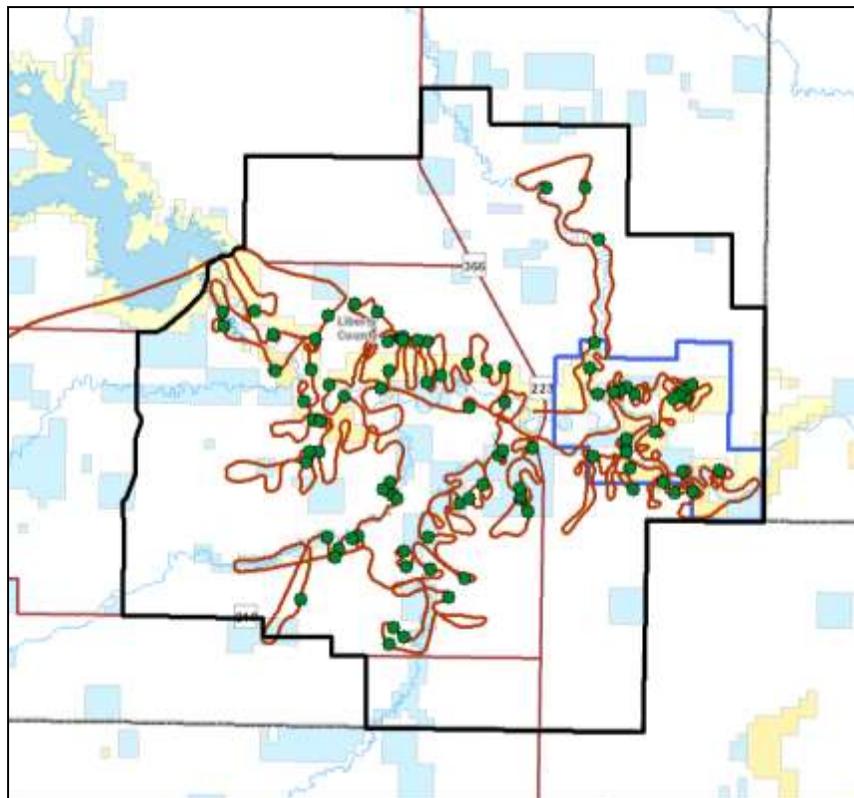


Figure 3. Moffat Bridge CWD Hunt Area Aerial Survey, 1/19/2019

To avoid overharvest of mule deer bucks, once the desired sample size of 25 mule deer bucks was met on either a general deer license or the Special CWD either-sex mule deer B licenses, the either-sex mule deer B licenses became valid only for antlerless mule deer. The general deer license remained valid for either-sex, either species for the entire general season (Oct. 26 – Nov. 17). Further, it was proposed when 120 mule deer doe samples are collected, all Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt B Licenses would no longer be valid, the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt would end and the Brinkman Game Preserve would return to archery hunting only. Given the relatively small population of white-tailed deer within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt boundary, it was anticipated that enough samples would be collected without the use of Special CWD white-tailed deer B licenses to determine prevalence.

Moffat Bridge Special CWD B licenses went on sale at 8:00 AM on September 23 at license vendors in Fort Benton, Chester, Shelby, Conrad and the Region 4 Great Falls office. Either-sex mule B licenses sold out at approximately 8:25 AM. At Shelby, Conrad & Chester as well as the Great Falls office, every hunter that arrived early and waited in line was able to get an either-sex license. Essentially, everyone that really wanted an either-sex B license was able to purchase that license. Only 1 nonresident purchased an either-sex B license.

Sales distribution of the either-sex B licenses was as follows:

- Lehmans, Ft Benton - 1 (Lehmans generally open at 8:30 AM which likely accounts for their one sale)
- Mountain View Coop, Conrad – 6
- Hi Line Hardware, Chester - 17
- Shelby Paint & Hardware, Shelby – 5
- Region 4 – 21

Seventy-seven hunters purchased a single CWD B license while 53 hunters purchased multiple CWD B licenses (Table 1). A total of 80 hunters purchased 155 antlerless CWD mule deer B licenses.

Table 1. Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt CWD license sales by number of hunters and licenses type.

Licenses Purchased	Hunters	Either-sex	Antlerless
1 Either-sex Only	22	22	0
1 Either-sex + 1 Antlerless	19	19	19
1 Either-sex + 2 Antlerless	6	6	12
1 Either sex + 3 Antlerless	3	3	9
1 Antlerless Only	55		55
2 Antlerless Only	15		30
3 Antlerless Only	10		30
Total	130	50	155
# Antlerless Only Hunters	80		

All deer hunters who purchased a CWD B license were sent a letter with CWD hunt regulations and a map (Appendix B).

Access

The Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area included private land enrolled in Block Management, public land (Bureau of Land Management, Department of Natural Resources Conservation, Bureau of Reclamation), and non-enrolled private land (Figure 4). Major landowners enrolled in Block Management were contacted individually prior to the special hunt to inform them of the hunt and address concerns. Moffat Bridge Special

CWD Hunt Regulations and Maps were posted and made available at Block Management Sign In Boxes within the special hunt area. In addition, a Special CWD Hunt meeting was held in Chester on Sept 9, 2019 providing details of the special hunt, regulations and access. A CWD presentation was also given at the Region 4 Citizen's Advisory Council on August 13, 2019.

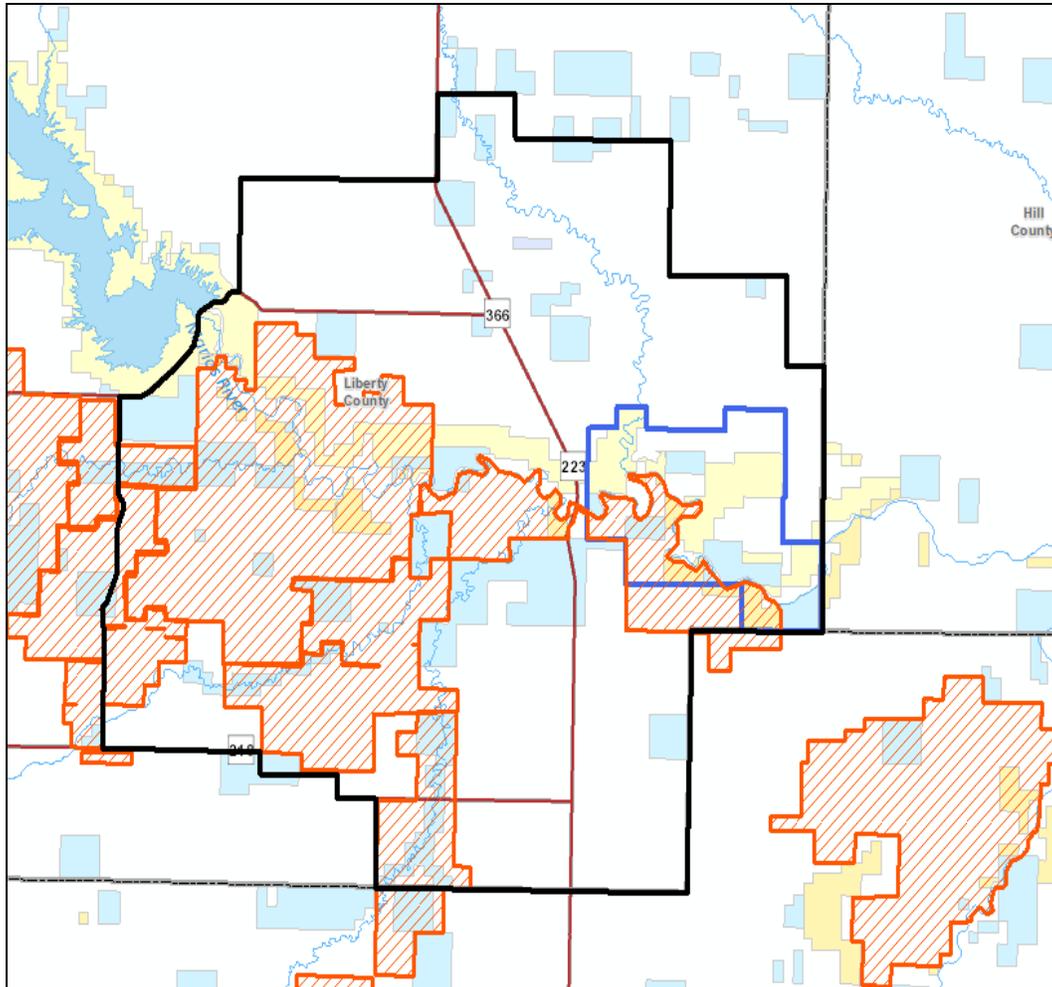


Figure 4. Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt land ownership and Block Management Areas (Red Polygons)

All hunters who harvested a deer on any deer license within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt was required to have the carcass inspected at the Moffat Bridge Check Station and to submit tissue samples for CWD analysis within 3 days of harvest. The Moffat Bridge CWD check station was centered within the IRA at Moffat Bridge and was open from 10:00AM until 30 minutes past sunset from Oct. 26 until Dec.,1.

Sampling

Note: *Moffat Bridge Check Station deer harvest records differ from Wildlife Laboratory harvest records due to portions of various sections in which deer were harvested being inside or outside the hunt boundary, hunter comments on location of harvest, GPS accuracy, and various potential sources of data recording and data entry error. Efforts were made to account for the differences, yet some differences were unable to be resolved. Given the differences in records are slight, the differences would not significantly affect analysis or results. Prevalence estimation was determined from Wildlife laboratory records only.*

A total of 281 deer were checked at the Moffat Bridge CWD Check Station with 173 deer (155 mule deer, 18 white-tailed deer) from within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Boundary (Table 2). A total of 71 mule deer bucks and 84 mule deer does were harvested on various license types within the Moffat Bridge Special Hunt Area (Table 3).

Table 2. Deer checked at the Moffat Bridge CWD Check Station by date, species, sex, and area.

Date	Inside CWD Hunt					Outside CWD Hunt					Total All Deer
	MD Buck	MD Doe	WTD Buck	WTD Doe	Total	MD Buck	MD Doe	WTD Buck	WTD Doe	Total	
10/26/2019	18	5	0	3	26	4	2	3	0	9	35
10/27/2019	6	18	1	0	25	6	1	0	0	7	32
10/28/2019	5	3	0	0	8	6	2	0	0	8	16
10/29/2019	2	5	0	0	7	1	1	2	0	4	11
10/30/2019	2	5	2	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
10/31/2019	1	1	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	1	4
11/1/2019	3	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	1	4
11/2/2019	1	5	0	0	6	5	3	2	1	11	17
11/3/2019	4	1	1	0	6	4	1	0	0	5	11
11/4/2019	8	5	0	0	13	2	0	0	0	2	15
11/5/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/6/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/7/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/8/2019	1	0	0	0	1	3	4	0	0	7	8
11/9/2019	5	3	0	0	8	2	1	1	0	4	12
11/10/2019	3	1	0	0	4	2	0	0	2	4	8
11/11/2019	0	3	0	2	5	2	0	0	0	2	7
11/12/2019	1	4	3	2	10	3	0	0	1	4	14
11/13/2019	1	2	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	2	5
11/14/2019	2	1	0	0	3	7	6	0	0	13	16
11/15/2019	0	1	1	1	3	1	0	1	0	2	5
11/16/2019	4	1	0	0	5	5	0	1	0	6	11
11/17/2019	4	3	0	0	7	6	2	3	2	13	20
11/18/2019	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	3
11/19/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/20/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/21/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
11/22/2019	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
11/23/2019	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
11/24/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/25/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/26/2019	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
11/27/2019	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
11/28/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11/29/2019	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
11/30/2019	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
12/1/2019	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	71	84	9	9	173	62	24	15	7	108	281

A total of 16 deer (15 mule deer, (9 bucks, 6 does) and 1 white-tailed buck) were harvested within the Brinkman Game Preserve (Figure 5).

A total of 102 deer were harvested on lands enrolled in Block Management during the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt.

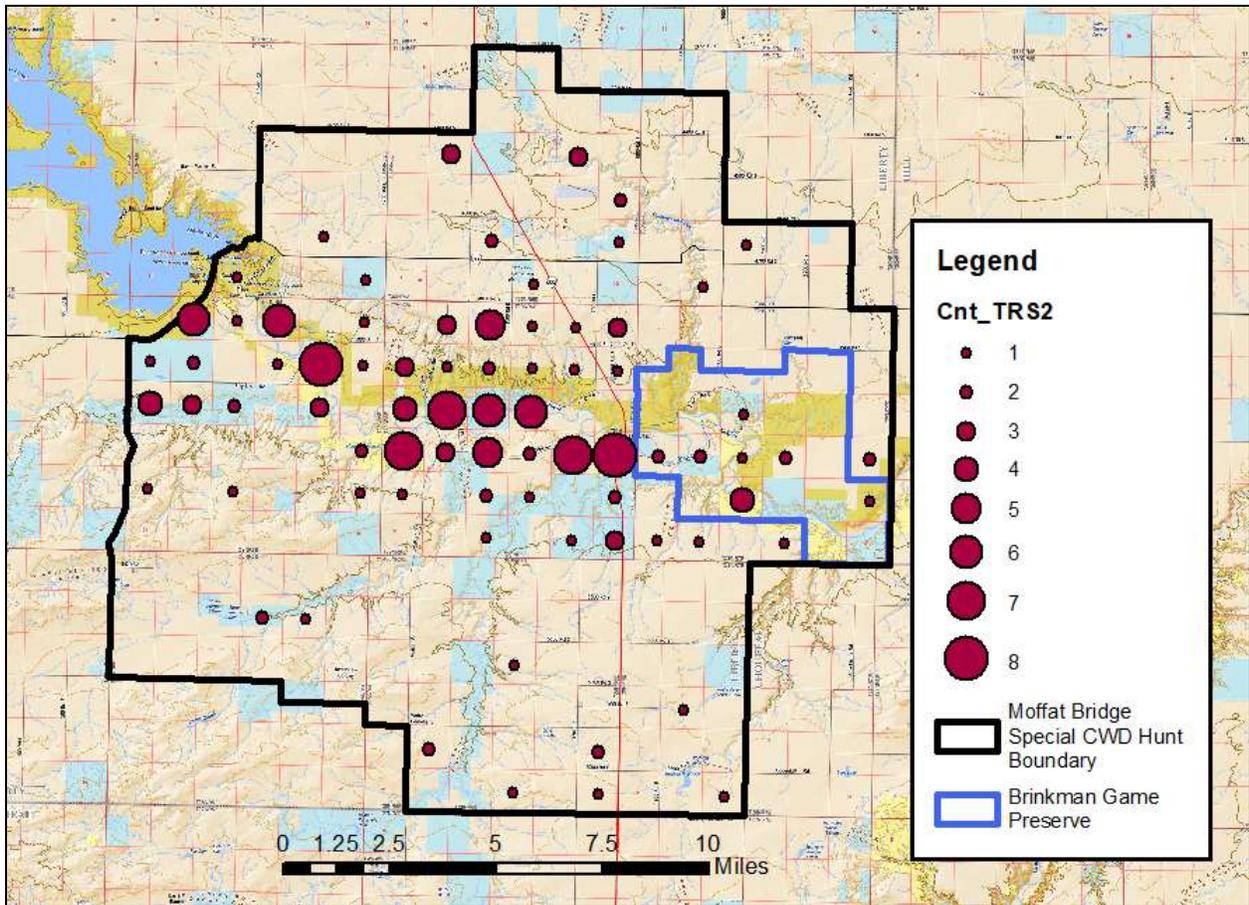


Figure 5. Deer harvest by section Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt.

A news release regarding the closure notice for mule deer bucks was sent via regular FWP Region 4 media channels on 10/27/2019. Mule deer buck harvest on the special either-sex CWD B-license became valid only for antlerless mule deer on 10/29/2019. A total of 25 mule deer bucks were harvested on the 50 either-sex mule deer B licenses for a success rate of 50%. A total of 65 antlerless mule deer were harvested on the 155 CWD antlerless mule deer B licenses for a success rate of 42% (Table 3). Only 3 antlerless mule deer were harvested on either-sex mule deer B licenses.

Table 3. Harvested deer checked from within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area by species, gender and license type.

License Type	Species and Gender			
	Mule Deer Buck	Mule Deer Doe	White-tailed Buck	White-tailed Doe
General License	46	11	9	
CWD Either-Sex	25	3		
CWD Antlerless		65		
004-00 OTC				9
400-00		5		
Total	71	84	9	9

Prevalence

During the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt, a single adult mule deer buck tested positive for CWD within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area. The deer was harvested on November 4, 2019 in Township 29N, Range 7 East, Section 19, approximately 1.5 miles from the previous known positive (Figure 6.). The hunter was notified immediately. No parts of the animal left the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area. No other deer sampled from HD400 tested positive for CWD.

Wildlife Laboratory data were used for calculating CWD prevalence from harvest records from 2017 through 2019. A total of 162 mule deer and 22 white-tailed deer CWD samples were collected from within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area during this time period. Only 2 CWD positive deer were documented within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt area, including one mule deer buck and one white-tailed buck. Therefore, prevalence was estimated to be 1% in mule deer (95%CI: 0-3%, n = 162) and 5% in white-tailed deer (95%CI: 1-22%, n=22) for the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area.

For Hunting District 400 a total of 332 mule deer and 51 white-tailed deer CWD samples were collected between 2017 and 2019. For HD 400, CWD prevalence among mule deer is estimated at 0.3% (95% CI: 0 – 2%). CWD prevalence among white-tailed deer is estimated at 2% (95% CI: 0 – 10%).

Long Term CWD Management HD 400

The Montana CWD Action Plan (2018) calls for development of a long-term management strategy following the detection of CWD. Following guidelines from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA, 2018), and the Montana CWD Action Plan (2018), FWP proposed a 5-week general deer season in several HDs including HD 400 in an effort to maintain CWD prevalence at a low level and reduce the potential for spreading CWD by shifting harvest to those deer most likely to be CWD positive. The proposal was changed to limited buck permits for the 2 weeks following the general 3-week season for both mule deer and white-tailed deer in several HDs including HD 400 only for the 2020 season. A total of 100 mule deer buck permits (LPT 400-50) and 40 white-tailed deer buck permits (LPT 400-51) were offered for the 2020 season.

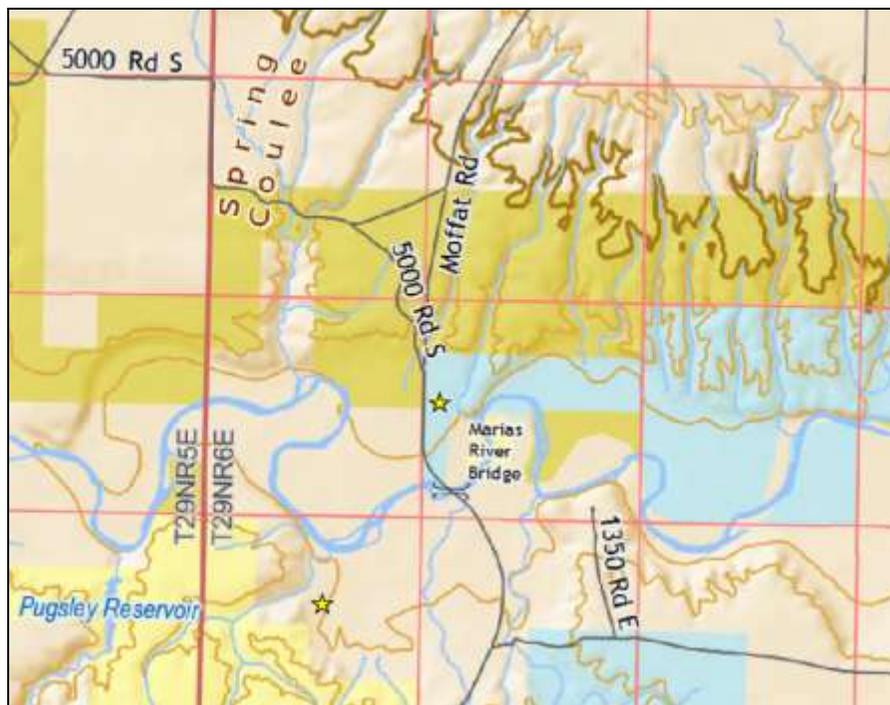


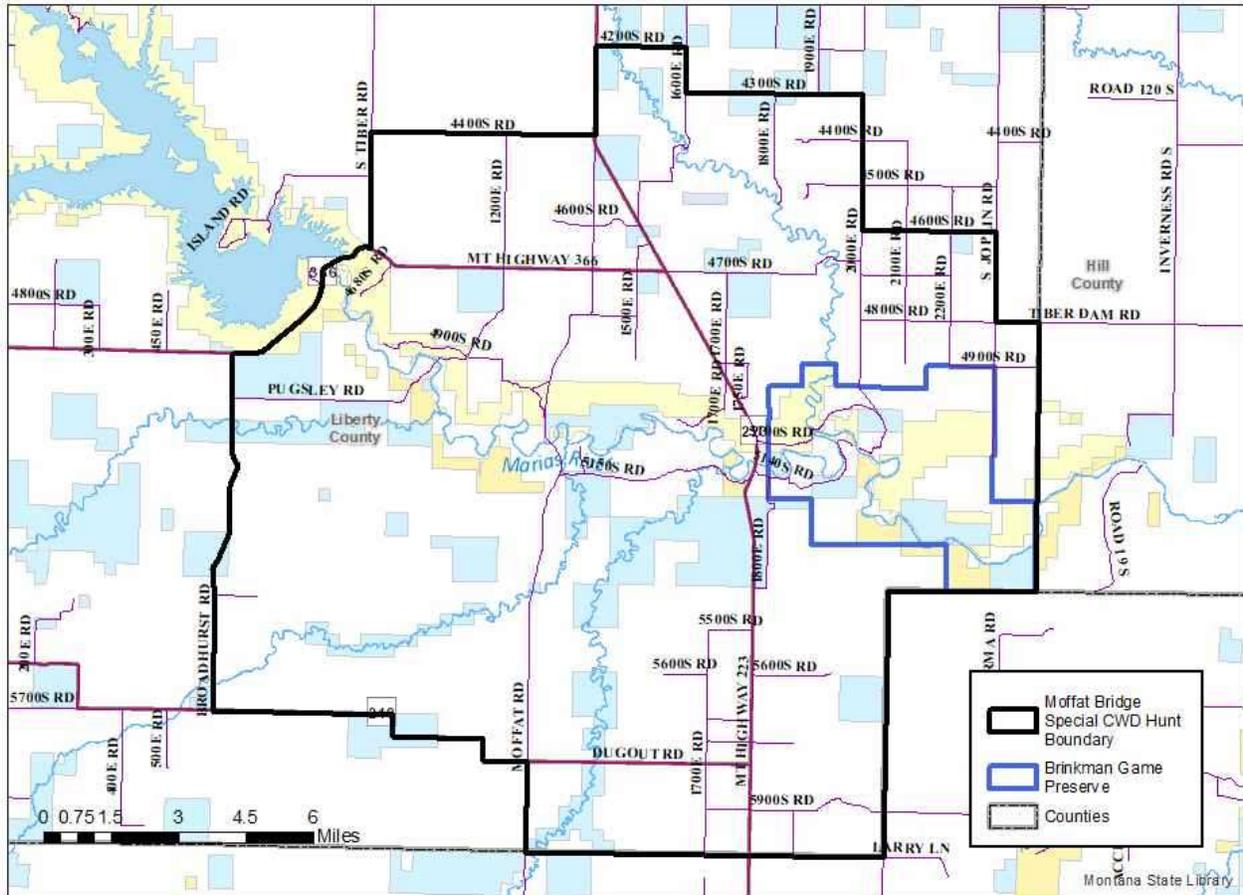
Figure 6. Approximate locations of CWD positive deer (yellow stars) harvested within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area in HD 400.

Literature Cited

AFWA. 2018. AFWA Technical Report on Best Management Practices for Prevention, Surveillance, and Management of Chronic Wasting Disease, https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/9615/3729/1513/AFWA_Technical_Report_on_CWD_BMPs_FIN_AL.pdf

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks CWD Action Team, 2018. *Montana CWD Management. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 55pp.*

Appendix A. Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Boundary



Legal Description:

That portion of Liberty County as follows: Beginning at the intersection of MT Highway 223 and County Road 4200S then eastward on said road to County Road 1600E, then southward on said road to Country Road 4300S, then eastward along said road to County Road 2000E, then southward along said road to County Road 4600S, then eastward along said road to South Joplin Road, the southward along said road to County Road 4800S, then eastward to the Liberty-Hill County Line, then southward along said boundary to the Liberty-Chouteau County Line, then westward and southwardly along said boundary to Moffat Road, then northwardly along said road to the Dugout Road, then westward along said road to Broadhurst Road, then norward along said road to Highway 366E, then eastward along said Highway to South Tiber Road, then northward along said road to County Road 4400S, then eastwardly to MT Highway 223, then northward to intersection of 4200S, the point of the beginning.

Appendix B. Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Letter and Regulations.



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1620 East Sixth Ave.
Helena, MT 59620
406-444-2535
fwp.mt.gov

September 25, 2019

Dear Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Mule Deer B License Holder,

Thank you for participating in the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt. With this letter you will find the special regulations about this hunt and a map. Please read the regulations carefully because they are different than the general hunting regulations. Depending on the type of B License you purchased it may be for either-sex or antlerless-only. There were 300 antlerless-only and 50 either-sex licenses sold to achieve a target harvest of 120 antlerless deer and 25 bucks. The hunt will begin on October 26 and end when the harvest quota and is reached or December 1, whichever comes first. If you have an either-sex license it is possible that the hunt for bucks may end before the hunt for antlerless. In that case your either-sex license would remain valid for antlerless animals until the end of the hunt. In this special circumstance rifle hunting will be allowed on the Brinkman Game Preserve, which is usually archery-only.

CWD is an always-fatal disease of deer, elk and moose. It is not known to affect humans, pets or livestock. If left unmanaged so that a large percentage of a herd becomes infected, CWD could cause significant population declines in the decades to come.

Now that CWD is here, we need to know what percent of the herd is infected and how far it has spread. This information will guide future management in line with the *Montana CWD Management Plan*. Because there are no good tests for live animals, we need to sample harvested deer. That's where you come in. There are important steps hunters need to follow to help us gather information and prevent the spread of CWD. As mentioned above, on a separate sheet you will find the regulations and map for the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt. Be sure to read and be familiar with these regulations.

For more information about Montana's CWD Management Plan and up-to-date information on FWP's efforts throughout the season, visit fwp.mt.gov/cwd.

It is in the best interest of all Montanans to manage CWD and we sincerely appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gary Bertellotti".

Gary Bertellotti
Region 4 Supervisor
Moffat Bridge CWD Response Incident Commander

Special Regulations for Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area

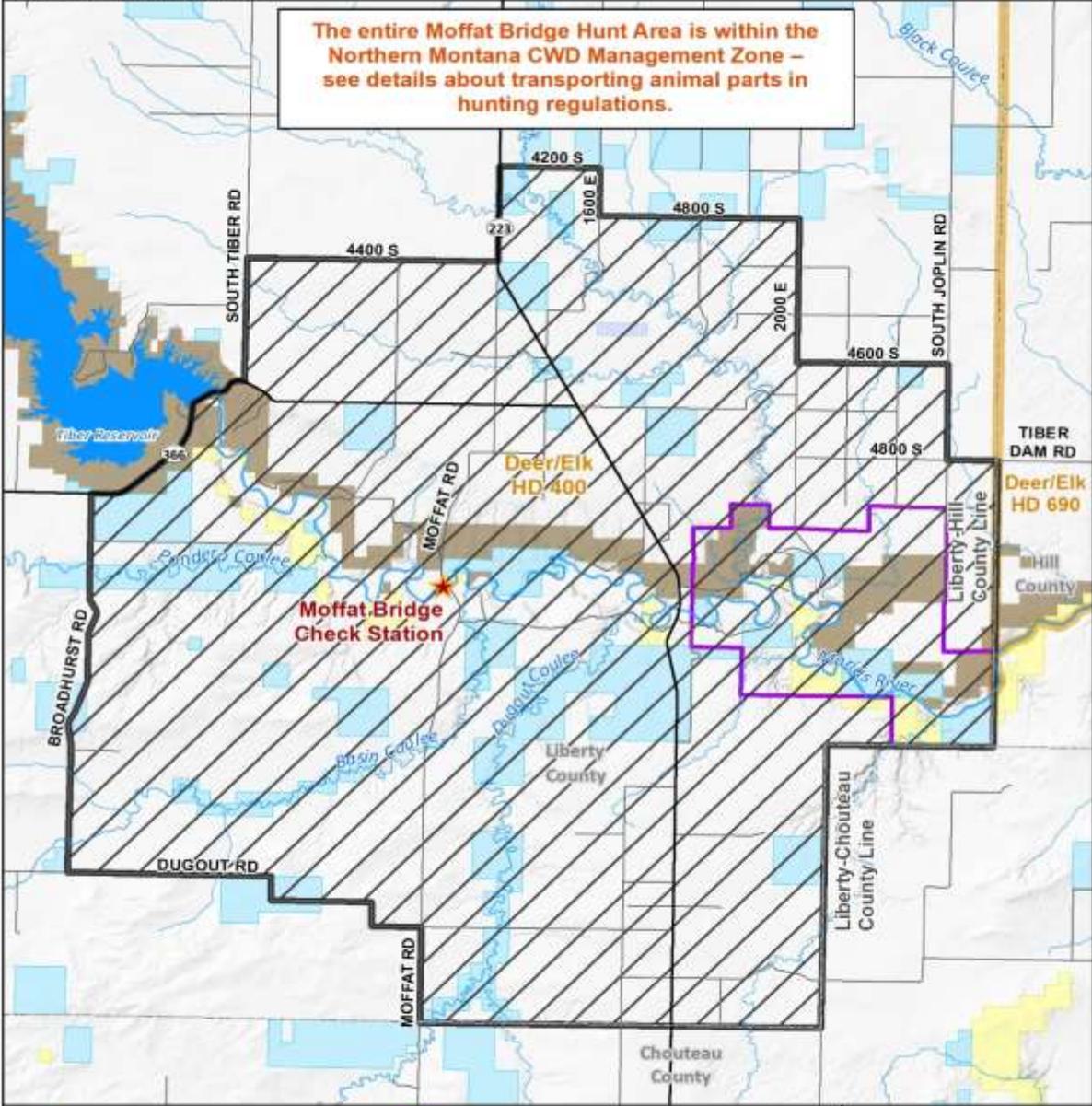
- The Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt will occur *only* within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area as shown and described on the map during the general deer and elk seasons (Oct 26 – Dec 1). All normal regulations apply.
- The Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt B Licenses are valid *only* for mule deer and *only* within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area.
- All deer licenses valid in HD 400 will also be valid within the Moffat Bridge Special Hunt Area.
- The Moffat Bridge Special CWD B licenses are valid Oct 26 – Dec 1. All other deer licenses valid in HD 400 are valid From Oct 26 – Nov 17.
- A Special CWD Hunt license does not grant access to any private land. Hunters must still receive landowner permission to access private land.
- *All deer* harvested within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area on any license *must* be checked and sampled within 3 days of harvest. Animals can be checked only at the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Check Station located 17 miles south of Chester on the Moffat Bridge next to the Marias River. Hunters who quarter or bone out their animal in the field must bring the head for sampling.
- During general season, Oct 26 to Dec 1, the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Check Station will be open every day from 10 AM – 1 hour after sunset. Hunters are only required to stop at the Check Station if they harvested an animal.
- The Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt will *end* when 25 mule deer bucks and 120 mule deer doe CWD samples are collected at the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Check Station.
- When 25 mule deer buck samples are collected on either a general deer license or the either-sex Moffat Bridge Special CWD B license, the Moffat Bridge Special CWD B License will be valid for antlerless mule deer only. When 120 antlerless mule deer samples are collected on any license, the antlerless Moffat Bridge Special CWD B licenses will no longer be valid.
- During this hunt only, the Brinkman Game Preserve will be open for both archery and rifle hunting of mule or white-tailed deer only. All other regulations regarding the Brinkman Game Preserve remain in effect.
- Animals will be tagged with a plastic tag reading “MTFWP CWD TEST” and a unique identification number. Hunters can use that identification number to look up test results on the FWP website at mt.gov/CWD. Test results are usually available within 10-14 days.
- To reduce the spread of CWD, whole carcasses, whole heads or spinal columns cannot be taken out of the Northern Montana CWD Management Zone which includes all of HD 400 and the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area unless the animal has tested negative for CWD. Hunters are strongly encouraged to dispose of hides, bones and trimmings at approved landfills.
- The spinal column may be left on site but require landowner permission on private land.
- Carcass parts that may be removed from the Northern Montana CWD Management Zone include:
 - meat that is cut and wrapped or meat that has been separated from the bone
 - quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached
 - hides with no heads attached
 - skull plates or antlers with no meat or tissue attached or skulls that have been boiled and cleaned to remove flesh and tissue

Moffat Bridge CWD Hunt Area

MONTANA FWP

More info at fwp.mt.gov/cwd

The entire Moffat Bridge Hunt Area is within the Northern Montana CWD Management Zone – see details about transporting animal parts in hunting regulations.



- ★ Game Check Station
- ▨ Moffat Bridge CWD Hunt Area
- ▭ Brinkman Game Preserve
- ▭ County Boundary

9/12/2019
Map valid for the 2019 hunting season
Map Produced by: MTFWP Geographic Data Services

CWD Management Zones

Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area Legal Description: That portion of Liberty County bounded on N by 4400S, HWY 223, 4200S, 1600E, 4300S, 2000E and 4600S roads; on E by South Joplin, 4800 S and Tiber Dam roads and the Liberty-Hill County Line; on S by Liberty-Chouteau County Line and Moffat and Dugout roads; on W by Broadhurst road, Hwy 366E and South Tiber road.