Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC)

Recommendations for Disposing of Taxidermy and Processing Waste from Deer

In recent years, concerns have increased about the possibility of moving disease from one state to another via deer and elk carcasses, or taxidermy specimens. The U.S., for instance, strictly regulates the import of African taxidermy specimens, due to the presence of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in Africa. For this same reason, game meat from Africa cannot be imported.

Although the U.S. has not seen FMD since 1929, a number of domestic diseases are known to affect game animals. Bovine tuberculosis, or cattle TB, (*Mycobacterium bovis*) affects some deer and elk in parts of Michigan and could be transported to another site in a carcass.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), though not known to be a human health threat, causes worry among states. Moving a CWD-affected carcass -- and particularly lymph nodes, the brain and the spinal cord -- could potentially create environmental contamination that may infect deer in another area. This situation recently rose to the forefront in New York, when the state's first known CWD-infected animal was a white-tailed deer doe owned by a taxidermist. The investigation in New York now indicates that taxidermy specimens from other states were not involved.

While tanned hides and capes create very low risk for disease transmission, "green" hides and material trimmed from the cape and skull (including brain material) pose a higher risk. Proper disposal of all waste material is essential to prevent potential disease transmission.

Some accepted means of disposal include:

- Incinerating organic waste material in an approved incinerator, <u>not</u> by open burning, even in a pit. Open burning usually violates clean air statutes.
- Burying organic waste material under at least 6 feet of soil. **Dumping the waste material on open ground is not acceptable**, as it makes waste material available to scavengers, such as feral pigs, coyotes, vultures, deer or other game animals.
- Placing organic waste material in a legal land fill. Always obtain permission from the land fill operator. These sites are acceptable, as the waste should be covered that day.

Using acceptable disposal methods reduces the risk of disease and helps to protect Texas' wildlife, hunting, and associated industries for future generations.

6/05