

Rabies in Captive Deer

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Katie Cowart] Hi, I'm Katie Cowart, and today I'm talking with Dr. Brett Petersen, a medical officer at CDC. Our conversation is based on his paper about rabies in captive deer, which appears in CDC's journal, *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. Welcome, Dr. Petersen.

[Brett Petersen] Thanks, it's great to be here.

[Katie Cowart] So Dr. Petersen, what is the purpose of deer farms?

[Brett Petersen] The main purpose of most deer farms is to raise deer for hunting preserves, and so these deer are often bred to have large antlers to make them appealing to hunters. But there are also many other products that can be made from deer, such as venison meat, deer skins or hides, deer urine, which can be used as an attractant for hunting, and even velvet antlers which are used in traditional Chinese medicine.

[Katie Cowart] In your study, the cases of rabies were concentrated in Pennsylvania. Why is this?

[Brett Petersen] Well, Pennsylvania is the first state where rabies was identified in captive deer. However, since the article has been published, additional cases have been reported in other states, so it may be that there is increasing awareness that deer can get rabies, and so now more cases are being recognized.

[Katie Cowart] You talk about the One Health concept in your study. Can you explain it a little more?

[Brett Petersen] One Health is a concept that emphasizes the interconnectedness of human health, animal health, and the environment. And that efforts to improve health should encourage collaboration among human medicine, veterinary medicine, and the environmental sciences.

[Katie Cowart] And what's the solution to captive deer getting the rabies virus?

[Brett Petersen] One of the most effective ways to prevent rabies is through vaccination. When you vaccinate an animal, you're not only protecting that animal but also preventing the animal from spreading the disease. With farmed deer and other livestock, it's also important to minimize contact between the deer and animals that can spread rabies. For example, storing food away from where the deer are held can help keep wild animals from coming into contact with the deer.

[Katie Cowart] And what should we do if we have been exposed to the rabies virus?

[Brett Petersen] If a person is bitten by an animal that might have rabies, the first thing that they should do is to wash the wound with soap and water. After washing the wound, they should seek medical attention as soon as possible to determine whether they need rabies vaccination, as well.

If the biting animal is available for testing or observation, this can also help determine if rabies vaccination is needed. Thankfully, rabies is completely preventable if proper medical care is given soon after the exposure occurs.

[Katie Cowart] And how big of a threat is this? Should people be concerned about visiting deer farms?

[Brett Petersen] Rabies is still rare among deer and we've never seen a human case of rabies associated with deer, so overall, the risk to people is low. But it's still important to be aware of the risk of rabies and to avoid contact with animals that can spread the disease. Lastly, people should make sure their dogs and cats are vaccinated to protect not just their pets, but the people in contact with their pets, as well.

[Katie Cowart] Thanks, Dr. Petersen. I've been talking with Dr. Brett Petersen about his paper, *Rabies in Captive Deer, Pennsylvania, USA 2007-2010*, which appears in the January 2012 issue of CDC's journal, *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. You can see the entire article online at www.cdc.gov/eid.

If you'd like to comment on this podcast, send an email to eideditor@cdc.gov. I'm Katie Cowart, for *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.