

**Q: What research is being done on DHLS?**

A: ODFW biologists in western Oregon are monitoring the prevalence and geographic spread of DHLS in deer populations by using a standardized sampling protocol. Veterinarians and other parasitologists are working to identify the muscle worm and lice that are found in large numbers in deer with DHLS. Research will be conducted by OSU in the near future, once funding is secured.

**Q: Is there anything people can do to help?**

A: Call your local ODFW office to report any deer you see that shows signs of DHLS so that the disease can be monitored. Proper carcass disposal can help minimize the spread of DHLS to new areas. If you find a dead deer, burn or bury the carcass, or leave it where you find it. Do not move the carcass to another location. Do not place feed out for deer, as this may concentrate deer and increase the spread of DHLS.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ...**

Toll-Free Number ..... 800-720-6339 (ODFW)  
 Main Number ..... 503-947-6000  
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 Licensing and Controlled Hunts ..... 503-947-6100  
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**FAST FACTS ABOUT ...  
DEER HAIR LOSS SYNDROME**

**Q: What is Deer Hair Loss Syndrome?**

A: Deer Hair Loss Syndrome (DHLS) is called a syndrome, not a disease, because the cause and method of transmission are not completely understood. The syndrome is most common in black-tailed and Columbian white-tailed deer. Common symptoms include yellow or white appearing hair or bare patches of skin. At first, some deer have darkening or almost black patches of fur. Later, deer may appear emaciated and lethargic, and exhibit excessive loss of hair.

**Q: What causes deer to lose their hair?**

A: While the cause of DHLS is not clearly understood, scientists do know that a key factor contributing to the loss of hair on deer is a hyper-sensitivity to lice commonly found on deer. Deer scratch, rub and chew on their hides in reaction to the lice infestation. This likely causes hair to fall out. In addition, these deer often have a heavy infestation of muscle worms that contribute to their sickness. Poor immune function also may be a contributing factor.

**Q: What do we know about how DHLS is transmitted?**

A: Researchers continue to gather information aimed at identifying the exact method of transmission. The most probable source of transmission is deer to deer (nose to nose contact, parasite sharing or ground contact), air (sneezing) or water. Deer in poor health are more susceptible than healthy deer, which explains why some deer in a herd have DHLS and others do not.

**Q: How prevalent is DHLS in Oregon's deer population?**

A: DHLS has become more prevalent each year in Oregon since it was first documented in 1996. It currently affects deer in most areas of western Oregon below 1,500 feet in elevation and may spread within the next few years into those areas that have not yet been affected. It affects both black-tailed deer and Columbian white-tailed deer. It has not been confirmed in mule deer, although some mule deer have displayed similar hair loss symptoms.

**Q: Do deer die of DHLS?**

A: Some infected deer will succumb to DHLS. Fawns and adult females are more likely to have DHLS than adult males, and infected fawns tend to have a higher mortality rate than infected adult females. Deer that survive will re-grow hair and gain weight during the summer. It is not known if deer that survive one year are more or less prone to being affected the next year.

**Q: What are the effects on the deer population?**

A: Based on declining hunter success rates, low fawn ratios, and public reports of dead deer, it

appears that some areas of Oregon have had significant deer losses. If DHLS continues to affect more areas each year, deer populations may decline significantly throughout much of western Oregon. It is hoped that – as in the case of most other disease problems – deer will develop resistance over time and the problem will control itself. Biologists are hopeful that the problem eventually will decline to the point where deer populations recover to normal levels, but this is not a certain outcome.

**Q: How is DHLS affecting tag numbers?**

A: The number of antlerless deer tags available has been reduced in most western Oregon controlled deer hunts. In some areas where losses have been severe, reductions in other deer hunting opportunities also are being implemented. For 2004, the general buck season was reduced by five days, many antlerless deer seasons were reduced in length, and the archery bag limit was changed to 2 points or better. If deer losses continue, antlerless hunts could be eliminated entirely. Unfortunately, eliminating hunts will not improve deer populations until this syndrome ends and fawn survival increases.

**Q: If someone sees a deer that is obviously sick, can they put it out of its misery?**

A: Oregon law allows anyone to euthanize any injured or sick wildlife for humane reasons. Euthanizing deer for humane reasons must be reported to Oregon State Police or ODFW immediately after the animal has been euthanized. If you see a deer that looks sickly and may have DHLS, call ODFW to report the incident. The ODFW biologist can assist you in evaluating the condition of the deer. If the deer needs to be euthanized, an ODFW biologist can

provide options on how to accomplish this, and can help dispose of the deer. A landowner cannot keep a euthanized deer. If the deer is within city limits, only approved law enforcement officers may euthanize the deer. Discharging firearms within city limits, even for euthanization of animals, is illegal for anyone except approved law enforcement officers.

**Q: Are humans at risk if they eat the meat from an infected deer?**

A: There are no known health risks to humans, predators or scavengers from eating meat from a deer infected with DHLS. However, experts recommend that you thoroughly cook the meat before eating it, as with any meat product.

**Q: Is DHLS contagious to children, pets or livestock?**

A: There are no known cases of humans, pets or livestock becoming sick from contact with a deer displaying symptoms of DHLS. However, it is recommended that you wear rubber gloves when handling any dead animal carcass.

**Q: What is ODFW doing to stop the spread of DHLS?**

A: There is no known way to stop DHLS from spreading in the deer population. ODFW is working with the Oregon Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Oregon State University to collect tissue samples for analysis to learn more about DHLS. To help limit the syndrome's spread, ODFW also has imposed restrictions on the release of rehabilitated deer that have DHLS. In addition, ODFW is educating the public about DHLS and asking for people's assistance in tracking it.