

# Deactivation of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Prions Using Composting

This study examines how composting could be used to deactivate CWD prions, potentially providing a solution to long-standing challenges in deer carcass disposal.

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## TIMELINE

Launch: May 2019  
Funded Through: June 2021

## FUNDING

Pittman-Robertson

## DNR PARTNER BUREAU

Wildlife Management

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Deer hunters  
Private landowners  
Conservation Congress  
CDAC  
Interested public



## KEY POINTS

- » There is a need for safe and cost-effective disposal of CWD-infected carcasses
- » Composting, through a combination of biochemical processes, has the potential to degrade and deactivate CWD prions
- » Under controlled experimental conditions, researchers will compost CWD-infected deer carcasses, continuously monitoring the composting process and collecting and testing leachate for the presence of prions
- » Research will be conducted within the double-fenced Almond Farm, a former captive cervid facility, now DNR-owned property.
- » The Prion Composting Project may guide best management practices for disposing of CWD-infected deer carcasses

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The Prion Composting Project will test the ability of composting to degrade and deactivate CWD prions in deer carcasses.

CWD-infected deer carcasses will undergo a controlled and monitored composting process contained within tubs. Leachate resulting from the composting process will be tested for CWD. There are persistent concerns regarding safety in the disposal of CWD-infected deer carcasses, including in landfill settings. The Prion Composting Project is intended to address these concerns and to work toward developing best-management practices for carcass disposal.

Research will be conducted at the Almond Farm, a DNR facility, previously a commercial cervid farm. Deer at the farm were depopulated in 2006, at which time it was discovered that 80% of those deer were infected with CWD. The Almond Farm is double-fenced, preventing deer from entering the facility and ensuring that this work does not pose a risk to wild deer.

This is a collaborative project with Wisconsin DNR, the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

## SPOKESPERSON

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