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Dr. Ellis and Mr. Smith:

On behalf of our memberships, we would like to thank the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) for hosting a CWD Symposium in January of 2016. We understand the focus of this symposium will be to better understand all aspects of ante-mortem (live-animal) testing. Expert testimony on tonsil, rectal, and retropharyngeal lymph node biopsy collection procedures, ante-mortem testing efficacy, and statistical analysis, interpretation, and comparison of test results is imperative in realizing the potential and applicability of ante-mortem testing in Texas.

Representing six major cervid industry associations with membership in Texas, we would like to formally request the following scientists be invited to participate. Each of these individuals is widely renowned in their fields of study. These experts embody years of direct experience with CWD, bringing the latest knowledge, expertise, and cutting-edge technology to the discussion. The CWD symposium in January is crucial to the future of our industry, and deserves the voice of those who are pioneering many facets of CWD disease management across the globe.

We formally recommend that you include the following:

**Dr. Nicholas Haley - Rectal Biopsy**

Dr. Haley is part of a scientific team at Midwestern University in Phoenix who is working to improve ante-mortem testing in cervids. In his research, samples are evaluated using cutting-edge approaches to detect very low levels of the prion agent that causes CWD in an effort to identify which sample and testing strategy is the most useful for diagnosis. Samples collected are also made available to researchers at various other institutions, such as Colorado State University and the National Institutes of Health at Rocky Mountain Laboratories both of which are actively pursuing an ante-mortem test for a variety of prion and other neurological diseases.

### **Dr. Lisa Wolfe - Tonsil Biopsy**

Dr. Wolfe is one of the research leaders in Ante Mortem CWD Palatine Tonsil Testing. Her research is conducted at the Colorado State University Research Facility in Fort Collins, Colorado and over the years she has taken thousands of tonsil biopsies on live animals such as mule deer, elk and whitetail. Dr. Wolfe has written many published, peer reviewed papers and is established as the leading expert in the field of research on the live animal Palatine Tonsil Test and the procedure to collect the correct samples to contain the proper amount of follicles from a biopsy. She is accepted as the leader to industry as well as USDA and the Wildlife Agencies across the country.

### **Dr. Nathan Shotts - Retropharyngeal Lymph Node**

Dr. Shotts is the Leader of the team of Veterinarians who have developed The VERGE Procedure, an ante-mortem procedure to biopsy MRPLN tissues in White Tailed Deer for regulatory and diagnostic testing that has negligible morbidity and mortality. The VERGE procedure provides the first genuine live diagnostic test for regulatory purposes, using approved gold-standard regulatory tissues and approved gold-standard regulatory testing, and which complies with Federal Law (9 CFR 55), Federal CWD Program Standards (May 2014), and Texas Law (4 TAC 40.5). The VERGE Procedure is an ante-mortem (live) procedure to biopsy Medial Retropharyngeal Lymph Node (MRPLN) tissues of white-tailed Deer for regulatory lab testing using any USDA/NVSL approved test (IHC, ELISA, Western Blot, etc.). Other existing live tests have excellent use as surveillance and management tools for a population or herd, but have limitations for specific diagnosis and early detection for any one animal due to a variety of factors, including sensitivity, accuracy, and not using tissues approved for regulatory decisions. The VERGE Procedure developed by Dr. Shotts and his team provides a genuine diagnostic live test capability for individual animals with gold standard accuracy, using currently approved gold-standard tissues and tests. The procedure has been refined in cooperation with the USDA and NVSL.

### **Dr. Byron Caughey - Statistical Analysis, Interpretation and Comparison of Test Results**

Dr. Caughey is a Senior Investigator and Chief of the TSE/Prion Biochemistry Section of the Laboratory of Persistent Viral Diseases, Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML) in Hamilton, Montana. RML is part of the National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases (NIAID), National Institutes of Health. Dr. Caughey has been on the editorial boards of several journals and is currently an editor for the Journal of Virology. Moreover, he is a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology and has served, or is serving, on the scientific advisory boards of agencies that fund or perform TSE/prion disease research.

### **Dr. Terry Spraker – Epidemiologist-Obex Scoring**

Dr. Spraker is Professor of Pathology at Colorado State. His research focuses on naturally occurring diseases in wild mammals and birds. Current projects include surveillance of chronic wasting disease of deer and elk, diseases of marine mammals and sea turtles. Dr. Spraker has conducted long-standing field studies evaluating population declines in arctic fur seals and understanding the anthropogenic influences and disease processes impacting these marine mammals.

### **Dr. Tracy Nichols - Blood Test**

Dr. Nichols is a molecular biologist in the Management of Ungulate Disease and Damage project at the NWRC within the USDA. Her current research interests include transmission of chronic wasting disease, prion biology, role of the environment and environmental constituents in CWD spread, and evaluation of ante-mortem testing for CWD.

We hope you will consider each of these scientists for the upcoming CWD Symposium. The findings of this symposium will undoubtedly shape the future of our industry in Texas. Should you need more information on any of the experts included, please feel free to call or email.

Sincerely,



Patrick Tarlton

Texas Deer Association.



Tim Condict

Deer Breeders Corporation



Charly Seale

Exotic Wildlife Association



Shawn Schafer

North American Deer Farmers Association



Travis Lowe

North American Elk Breeders Association

American Cervid Alliance