

COVID-19 antibodies found in wild US deer

A US Department of Agriculture (USDA) study has determined that some free-ranging deer in Michigan, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The news was released in a USDA bulletin.

The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) undertook the study because white-tailed deer are abundant in the US and often come in close contact with people. They noted studies like this help them understand which animals could act as reservoirs or hosts for the virus as well the risks of cross-species contamination and the impacts on the species in general.

APHIS collected 481 samples between January 2020 and March 2021 from the four states and found that antibodies were in 7% of 101 samples in Illinois, 67% of 113 samples in Michigan, 19% of 68 samples in New York, and 31% of 199 samples in Pennsylvania. They caution that these percentages should not be taken an indication of the prevalence of the virus in the herds state-wide as a whole.

The study could not ascertain how the animals got the virus. The bulletin also noted that there is no evidence that animals play a significant role in the spread of COVID-19 to people and said, based on available information, the risk is low.

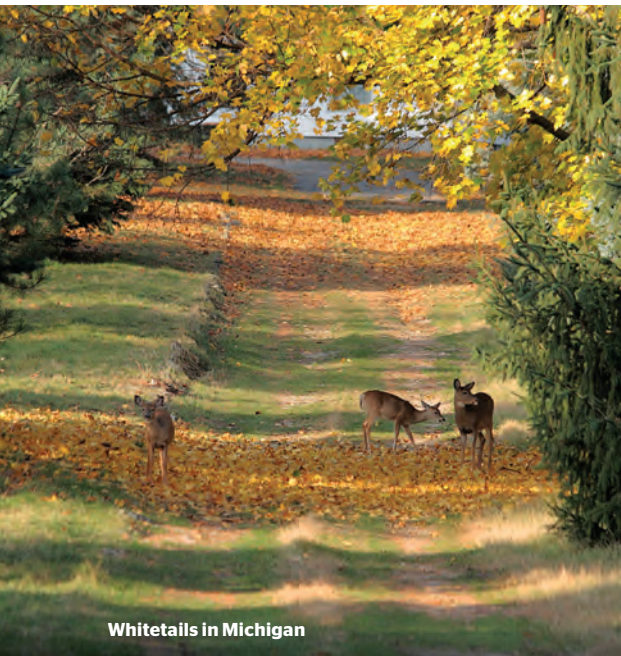
Though the study did not investigate whether clinical signs of illness was prevalent in the animals that had the virus, their observations did not observe any indications that this was the case. Also, captive deer experimentally infected with SARS-CoV-2 by the USDA did not show any clinical signs of illness.

The bulletin also noted that the deer had been exposed to, rather than infected, with the virus.

"An animal is said to have been 'exposed' to or infected with a pathogen when antibodies to a pathogen are detected in its blood. Antibodies are the result of an immune response to infection with a pathogen, and their presence does not necessarily suggest a current infection," according to the USDA.

The tests used to analyze the deer serum samples in this study were only able to detect antibodies, not the virus itself. The bulletin also noted there is no evidence that people can get COVID-19 by preparing or eating meat from an animal infected with SARS-CoV-2.

– Steve Galea



Whitetails in Michigan

Pumpkinseed record confirmed

DNA testing that began in 2018 has confirmed that Ontario has a new pumpkinseed record. The 1.37-pound fish was caught by Chris Yates of Chatsworth, Ontario on the Rankin River near the community of Oliphant on May 8, 2018. The fish, caught on a beadhead nymph, was 10.8 inches long and had a 12-inch girth. It is now registered in the OFAH's Ontario Record Fish registry and replaces a 1.0-pound pumpkinseed caught by Fred Thorn on August 30, 1997, on Beattie Lake. That fish was 10 inches long and had a girth of 14 inches.

– Steve Galea



ERIN WATER TREATMENT PLANT UPDATE

The Coalition of the West Credit River — a group opposed to the construction of the Erin Wastewater Treatment Plant that will, according to the group, cause environmental damage to the river's ecosystem — filed an Environmental Bill of Rights application for Investigation of the town of Erin.

The coalition is concerned that the town of Erin is moving forward with construction despite not meeting key commitments outlined in its Environmental Study Report (ESR). One of those commitments was creating an addendum to the report once a final site was chosen.

"Failing to issue an addendum to the ESR deprives stakeholders, the public, and Indigenous communities of the opportunity to be consulted and provide input into this highly controversial project", said Linda Heron, Chair of the Ontario Rivers Alliance.

The coalition represents the Belfountain Community Organization, Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Club, Ontario Rivers Alliance, Ontario Streams, Trout Unlimited Canada — Greg Clark Chapter, and the West Credit River Watch.

– Steve Galea