SOUTHEASTERN COOPERATIVE WILDLIFE DISEASE STUDY

SCWDS BRIEFS

A Quarterly Newsletter
Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study
College of Veterinary Medicine
The University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602

Winter 2026 — Volume 43 — Number 4

Eds. M. Ruder and B. Kurimo-Beechuk

Bald eagle, D. Carter

In this issue

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White-tailed deer, L. Jorge

Cervid health updates

2025 HD summary

Hemorrhagic disease (HD) is one of the most important diseases of white-tailed deer in North America. During 2025, as in every year since the early 1990s, SCWDS conducted passive surveillance for epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV) and bluetongue virus (BTV) in support of wild ruminant mortality investigations by state wildlife agencies. Annually, we receive case submissions from throughout much of the US. This passive surveillance approach is dependent upon tissue sample submissions by state wildlife agencies. Here, we present results of HD diagnostics performed at SCWDS during 2025, as seen on the map on the next page. There are numerous states with EHDV/BTV detections not represented on this map, as they utilize other laboratories. As there is no national surveillance program for HD in the US, the results of this long-term passive surveillance effort provide important information regarding annual HD activity in much of the US.

Testing involves a combination of classical and molecular virologic methods. For all submissions, samples were screened for EHDV and BTV using real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) assays with virus isolation attempted on rRT-PCR-positive samples. For isolated EHD viruses and samples with sufficient viral genetic material, virus serotype was determined. For BTV serotyping, we collaborate with virologists at **USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL)**.

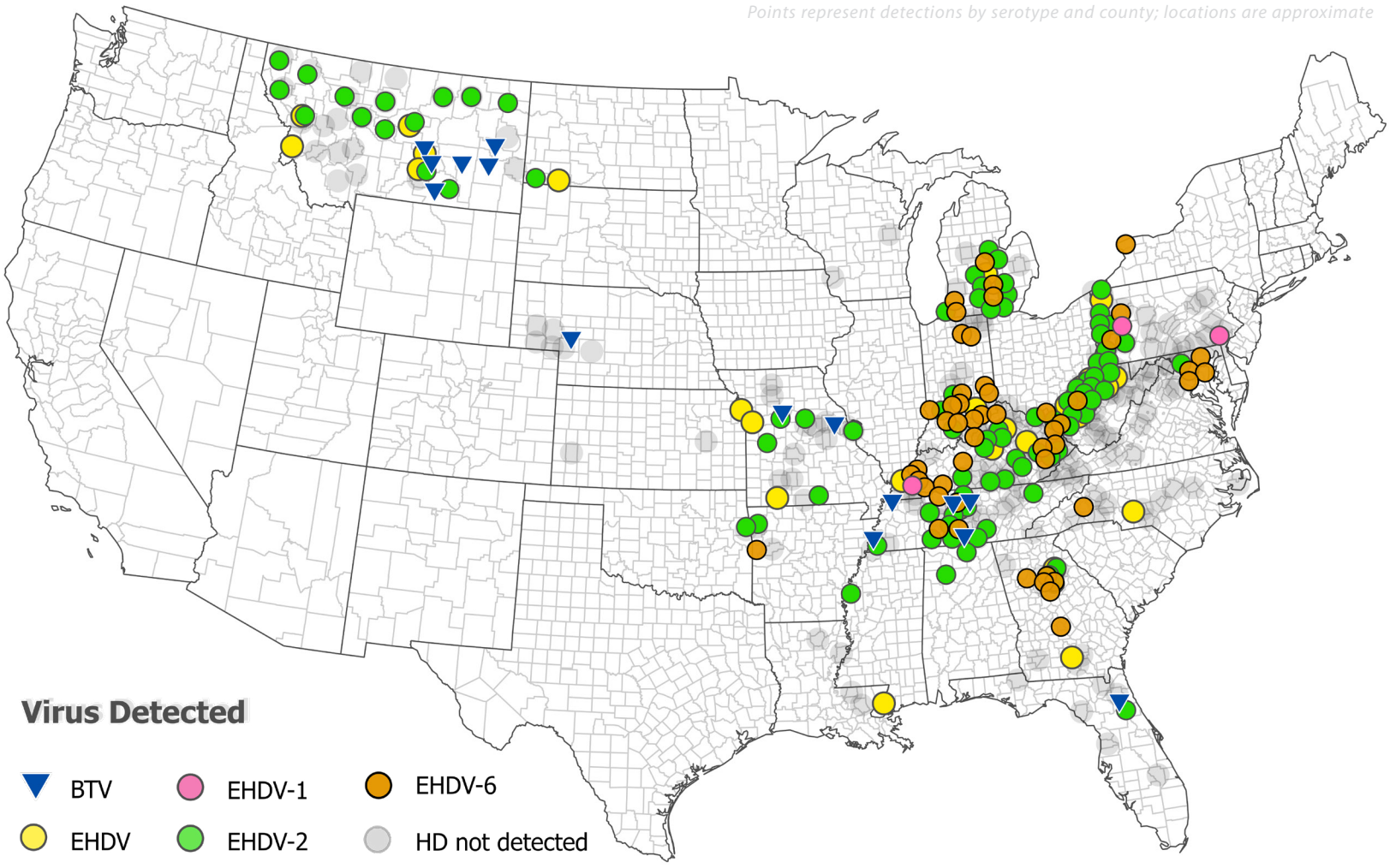
In the **Summer 2025 issue** of the **SCWDS BRIEFS**, we provided a sneak peek into the 2025 HD season. At that time, we anticipated that the season would be busy based on the timing and locations of detections observed during late July and August. The earliest detection was a white-tailed deer from Erie County, Pennsylvania that died from EHDV-2 on July 24. There were three other detections of EHDV-2 during that last week of July – Mississippi, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The near simultaneous detection of EHDV-2 across such a large geographic area in late July served as a warning sign that perhaps the 2025 HD season would be busy. Indeed, that

suspicion became reality, as SCWDS received a record number of samples for EHDV/BTV testing during 2025.

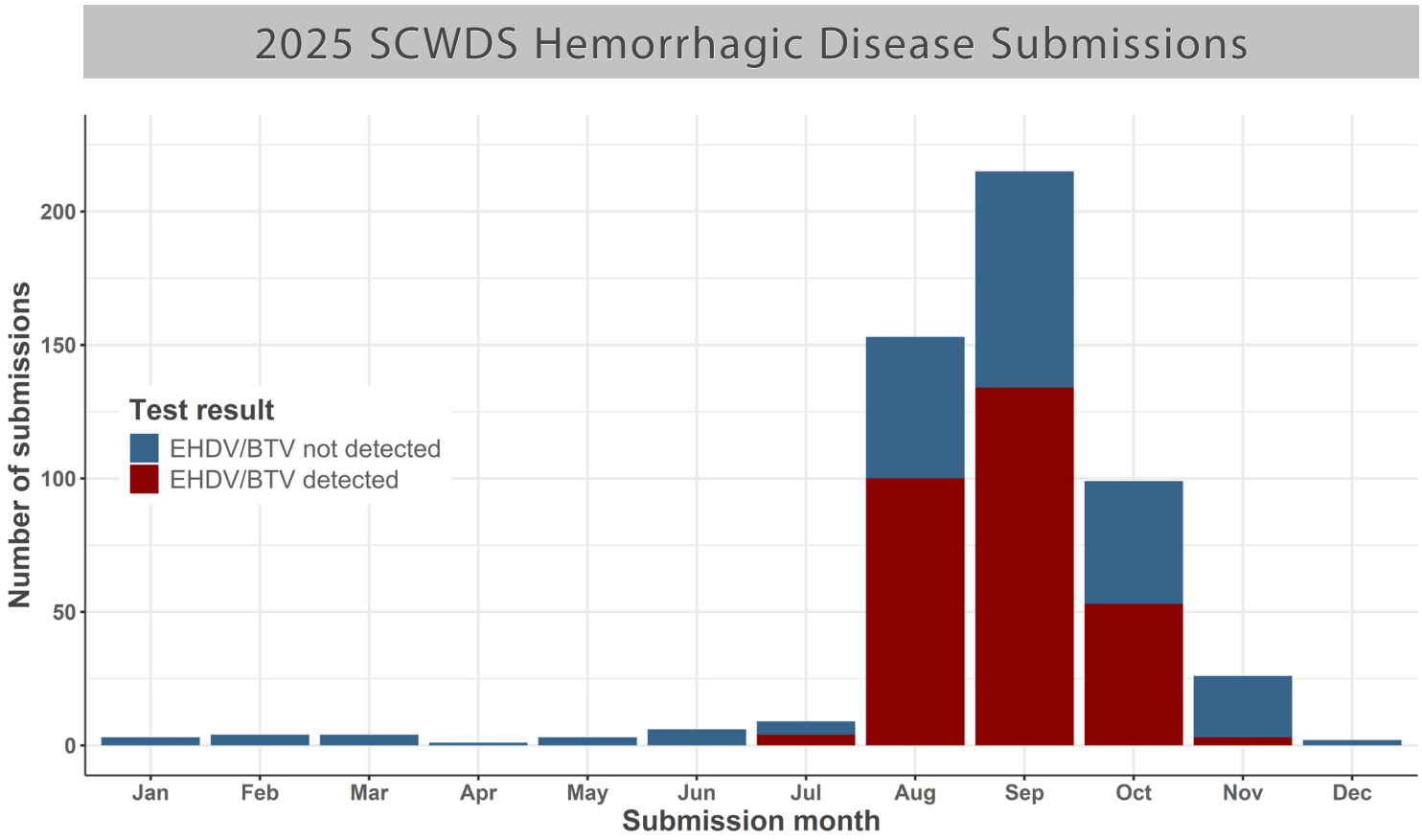
During the calendar year of 2025, 525 wild ruminant tissue samples from 23 states were received for HD diagnostics. Consistent with other years, white-tailed deer dominated these submissions [490 white-tailed deer, 19 mule deer, seven elk, six pronghorn, one bighorn sheep, one red deer (escaped), and one fallow deer (escaped)]. After the first virus detection in late July, submissions and detections continued through the autumn months with a peak occurring in September, visible in the barplot on the next page. This temporal pattern was consistent with our observations over the last 30 years. Confirmed cases of acute HD generally decline during October as colder temperatures reduce the activity of the *Culicoides* biting midge vectors at the heart of the transmission cycle.

Overall, 294 animals (282 white-tailed deer, five mule deer, four pronghorn, and three elk) tested positive for EHDV and/or BTV by rRT-PCR. Virus was isolated from 136 (47%) of these rRT-PCR positive samples. EHDV was detected by rRT-PCR in 275 white-tailed deer, three elk, two mule deer, and two pronghorn from 20 states. All three EHDV serotypes that are established in the US (EHDV-1, -2, -6) were detected. EHDV-2 was detected in 168 white-tailed deer from 16 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North

2025 EHDV/BTV Detections By SCWDS



Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia, as well as an elk, mule deer, and pronghorn from Montana. EHDV-6 was detected in 56 white-tailed deer from 12 states: Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. Finally, EHDV-1 was detected in three white-tailed deer from Kentucky and Pennsylvania. EHDV was detected in an additional 50 white-tailed deer, one pronghorn, one mule deer, and two elk, but serotype could not be determined (e.g., small amount of viral RNA present in the sample). There were 19 BTV detections, including: 12 white-tailed deer from Florida, Missouri, Montana, and Tennessee; four mule deer from Nebraska and Montana; and three pronghorn from Montana. Further characterization of BTV detections is pending at NVSL.



The locations of HD outbreaks and the viruses involved vary annually within the historical and expanding range of HD in the US. This variation is likely driven by interacting climatic and biologic factors that are not well defined at this time. Based on samples submitted to SCWDS during 2025, there were prominent EHD outbreaks that appear to have again centered on parts of the Upper Midwest, Ohio River Valley, and Mid-Atlantic regions. The occurrence of HD outbreaks in these geographic areas has been increasingly common over the last two decades. The Ohio River Valley appears to have had the most intense outbreak this year, based on large numbers of virus detections and public reports of sick and dead deer. As with most years, the map we present in this article is incomplete, as it only shows virus detections made by SCWDS. However, not all wildlife agencies submit samples to SCWDS. A notable example this year was Ohio. Based on communication with staff at the **Ohio Department of Natural Resources**, EHD was confirmed in multiple counties in Ohio, and an EHDV-2 outbreak was particularly intense in southeastern Ohio just across the Ohio River from the EHD outbreak we documented in multiple West Virginia counties.

Although EHDV-2 was the most common virus detected overall, EHDV-6 was the predominant virus detected in Georgia, Indiana, Maryland, and parts of Kentucky. A large number of detections, primarily EHDV-2, occurred in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia, as well as pockets in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Michigan. Interestingly, EHDV-2 was widely detected across Montana, from the eastern plains to the western Rockies. There were also numerous detections of BTV involving four species of wild ruminants in southeastern Montana. Aside from these larger foci of HD, there were scattered detections of EHDV and BTV throughout numerous eastern states.

Interestingly, based on the footprint of reported and confirmed HD in 2024, outbreaks appear to have occurred in some of the same areas again during 2025. This is especially true in parts of southern Michigan, northern Indiana, and other states along the Ohio River Valley, including Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. This may cause some to wonder how these states are experiencing outbreaks in consecutive years and why deer are not developing protective immunity. This is an active area of research, but there are a couple potential explanations. First, counties are typically large geographic areas, and HD outbreaks can be highly localized. Thus, despite consecutive outbreaks occurring in the same general area, they may in fact involve different localized areas with populations of deer not affected by the prior year's outbreak. This is important because deer in more northern areas of the US are less likely to have antibodies against EHDV or BTV that would offer protection against disease (because they have not been previously infected). Second, even if an outbreak were to occur in the same population, if different viruses (i.e., EHDV vs BTV) or different serotypes (e.g., EHDV-6 vs -2) are involved between years, the population would be at risk for disease. Both of these scenarios (i.e., different local populations affected and different viruses involved) may have occurred across the 2024 and 2025 outbreaks. Development of population immunity that will protect a population from subsequent disease (as occurs in parts of the Southeast) requires frequent and widespread virus transmission to maintain a high prevalence of antibodies in the population.

The virologic data we generate through annual diagnostic testing provides important information that strengthens the annual reporting of morbidity/mortality received through our annual National HD Questionnaire. This 44-year long-term data set is utilized to better understand patterns of disease and serves as a baseline to detect changes in HD distribution, intensity, and EHDV/BTV diversity. Results of the 2025 National HD Questionnaire are currently being compiled, which will help to better visualize the true geographic footprint of suspected and confirmed HD during 2025. The continued detection of EHDV and BTV in northern states demonstrates the sustained northeasterly expansion of HD. What once was an extremely uncommon occurrence is becoming frequent to the point of normalcy – highlighting the dynamic nature of HD.

We thank the many wildlife professionals who submitted tissue samples for diagnostic testing this past season. We also thank Dr. Mia Torchetti and others at NVSL for their continued collaboration with confirming and characterizing BTV detections.

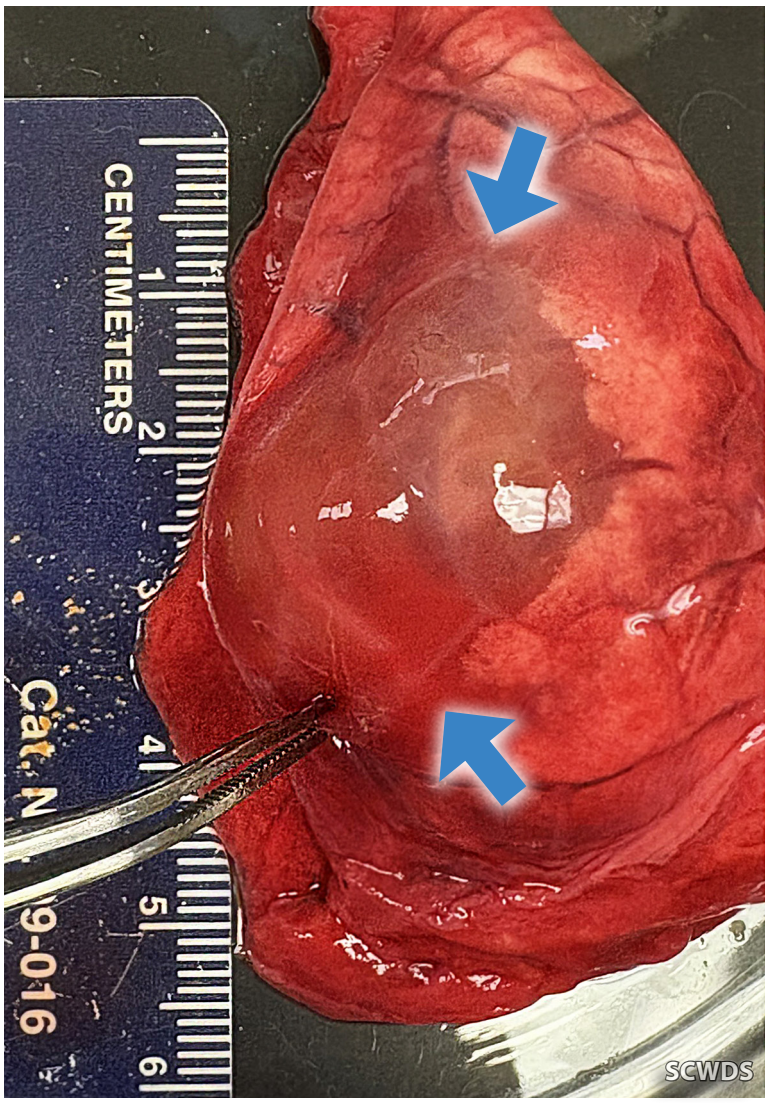
Prepared by Mark Ruder, Lyndon Sullivan-Brugger, Dave Stallknecht, Tori Andreasen, Juliet Woodward, Paul Oesterle, Betsy Kurimo-Beechuk, Nicole Nemeth and Rebecca Poulson

Echinococcus canadensis detected in a white-tailed deer

In January 2026, a gravid female white-tailed deer in good physical condition was hunter-harvested in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. In this particular case, the hunter just so happened to be a **SCWDS graduate student and biologist** for the **West Virginia Division of Natural Resources**. During field dressing, the hunter observed 5-6 fluid-filled cysts, ranging from 2.5-4.5-cm in diameter and retained the heart and lungs for examination. Two cysts with adjacent lung tissue were removed and frozen approximately three hours postmortem for further evaluation, denoted by the blue arrows in the image to the right.

Lung samples were submitted to SCWDS and **Pennsylvania State University**. Gross examination at SCWDS revealed circular fluid-filled cysts containing numerous protoscolices (i.e., the larval infective stage) morphologically consistent with *Echinococcus*. To confirm the identity of the parasite, genomic DNA was extracted from the specimen, and a region of the cytochrome c oxidase (COI) gene was amplified and sequenced. The 396 base pair consensus genetic sequence was 100% identical to several *Echinococcus canadensis* G8 sequences from the US and Canada, confirming the identification.

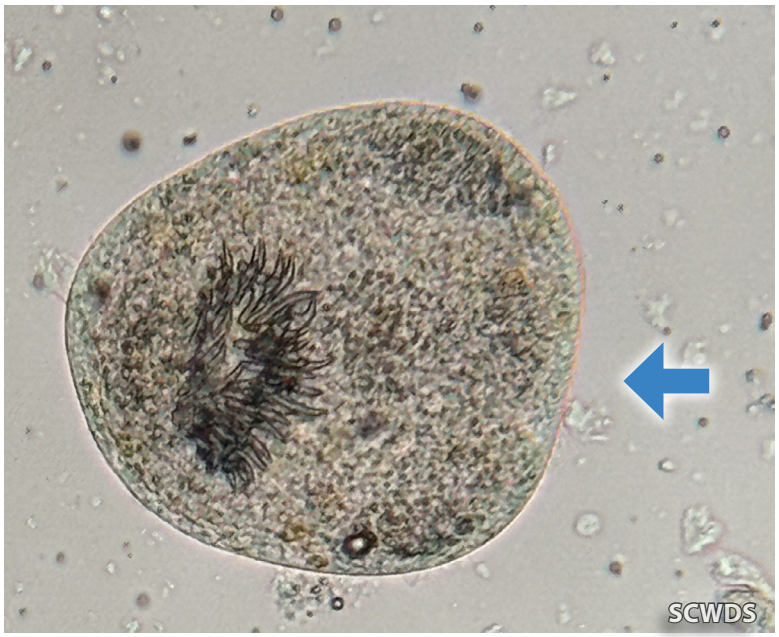
Echinococcus species are globally distributed cestodes (i.e., tapeworms) that pose significant health risks to humans as several species are zoonotic. In the US, the two most common species in wildlife are *E. multilocularis* and *E. canadensis* (G8 and G10 genotypes), which use canids (wild and domestic) as definitive hosts and rodents and cervids as intermediate hosts, respectively. Although *E. canadensis* G8 has a circumpolar distribution in the Northern Hemisphere, it is increasingly reported in new areas of the eastern US, either due to enhanced surveillance or emergence. In Pennsylvania, infections with



E. canadensis G8 have been **previously reported** in coyotes and **again** in another coyote from Wyoming County. The current white-tailed deer case was from northcentral Pennsylvania, expanding the known range of this parasite in the state. Additionally, *E. canadensis* has been **reported** in coyotes and moose in the Northeastern US and Canada. Human cases are rare and result from ingesting food/water contaminated with canid feces. In the US, two human cases of presumed *E. canadensis* have also **been reported** in New Hampshire. Collectively, these data indicate that the risk of *E. canadensis* infection is broader than previously recognized and appears widespread in the Northeastern US.

The two cysts examined microscopically were both fertile with dozens of protoscolices present which are visible next to the blue arrow in the

Echinococcus in a white-tailed deer

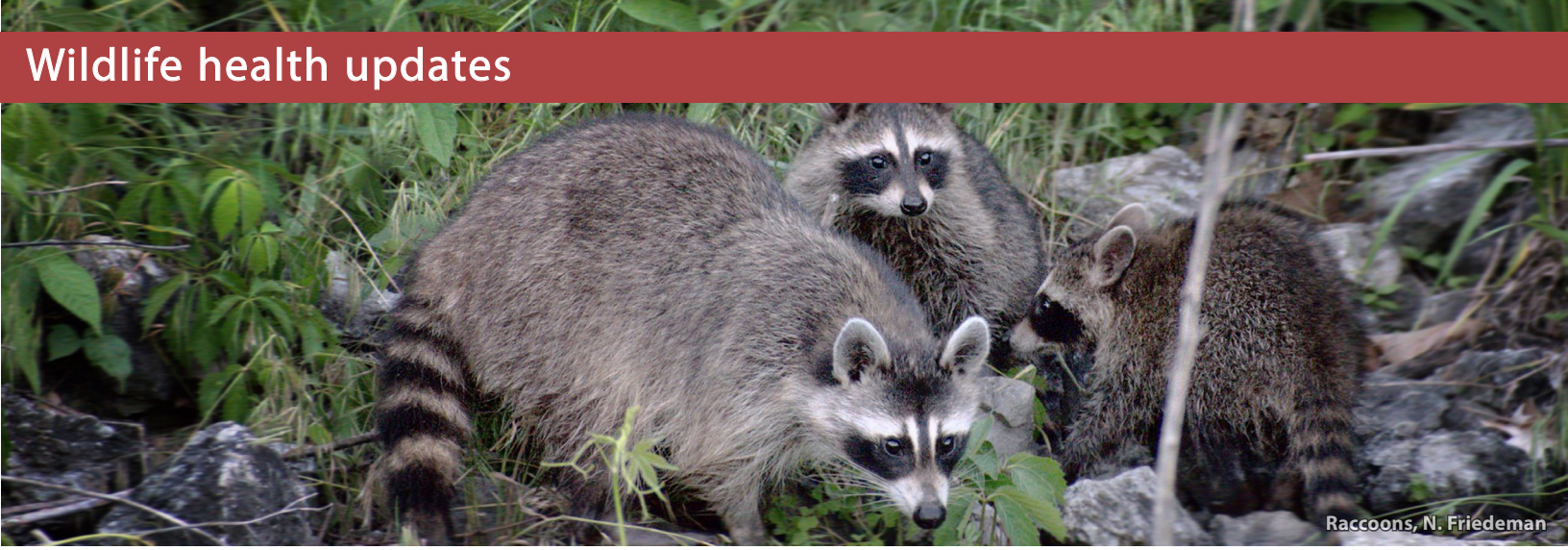


microscopic image above, indicating white-tailed deer are suitable intermediate hosts. Although infections have been noted in white-tailed deer previously, prevalence data are limited. **Historical studies** in Canada suggest prevalence of *E. canadensis* G10 was generally lower in white-tailed deer compared with sympatric elk, caribou/reindeer, and moose. Historical studies in California **reported** a low average prevalence (1.3%) in mule deer, although prevalence at one site reached 24%. However, data for white-tailed deer are too limited to determine if they are more resistant to infection or if infection risk varies due to habitat use or other factors. Elk are expanding their range in many states in the eastern US and moose occur in several Northeastern states, so these species should be monitored.

Surveillance for *Echinococcus* in the US has predominantly focused on surveillance of domestic ruminants during routine abattoir inspections and sporadic necropsy of wild canids. Examination of wild cervids in the US has been limited and is often related to incidental detections in hunter-harvested animals rather than systematic surveillance. Importantly, in the current Pennsylvania case, one cyst was grossly visible from the surface of the lung; however, the remaining cysts were located deeper in the lung tissue and were detected only after the lung was palpated. Thus, efforts to conduct surveillance for *E. canadensis* in cervids should ensure that lungs (and other tissues such as liver) are carefully examined on both the outer surface and cut surfaces, as many cysts could be missed if only the outside of the lung is examined. Although other organs were not systematically examined in this deer, most cysts are generally found in the lungs. Given the subtle nature of *Echinococcus* cysts in some deer, it was fortunate that a trained wildlife health specialist was the one who harvested this particular deer. As highlighted above, cryptic tissue cysts may be difficult to observe, and it is possible that the occurrence of *Echinococcus* cysts is more common than is presently known.

There are also increasing **reports** of a related parasite, *E. multilocularis*, in the eastern US. This parasite also uses domestic and wild canids as definitive hosts but uses rodents as intermediate hosts instead of cervids. The two parasites can be distinguished by cyst morphology and by partial genetic sequence analysis. Most reports of *Echinococcus* infections in domestic dogs in the eastern US have been due to *E. multilocularis*, which may be related to dogs being more likely to ingest rodents than cervids. Because the eggs of both *Echinococcus* species are morphologically similar to *Taenia*, a common intestinal parasite of dogs, veterinarians should conduct molecular testing to distinguish these parasites. Overall, this detection of *E. canadensis* G8 infection in a white-tailed deer expands the known range of this parasite in the Northeastern US and indicates that white-tailed deer may play an important role in the maintenance of this emerging zoonotic parasite in the region. Continued surveillance of wild and domestic canids and cervids is needed to evaluate infection risks in the US.

Prepared by Kayla Garrett, Ethan Barton, Michael Yabsley, and Christopher Cleveland


Raccoons, N. Friedeman

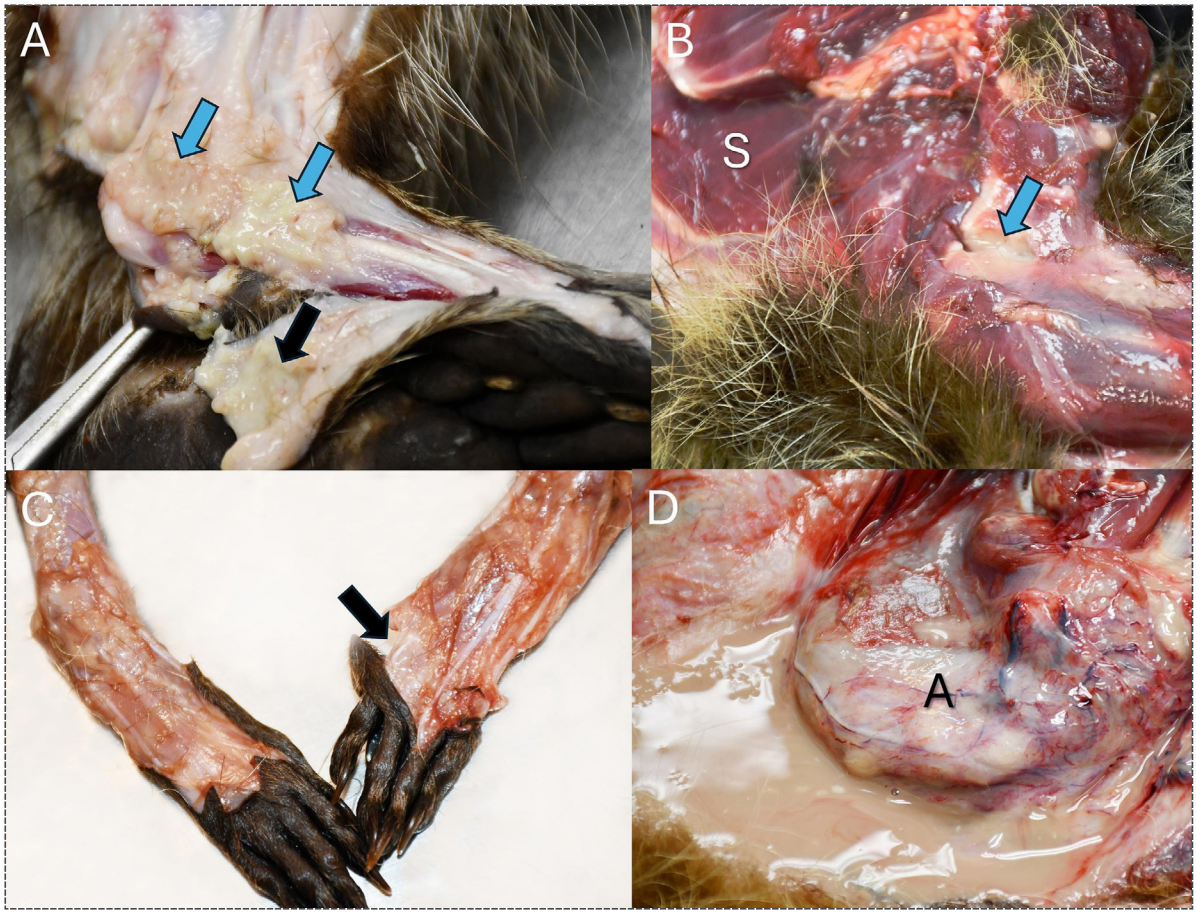
Mycoplasma-associated polyarthritis in raccoons

SCWDS, UGA researchers, and students recently **published** a case series of *Mycoplasma*-associated polyarthritis in raccoons in collaboration with **Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries** and the **Jekyll Island Authority**. The cases were submitted between March 2023 and March 2024 from Louisiana and Georgia. Raccoons had lesions of variable severity, but a common feature was one or more joints that contained purulent material (pus), as well as pockets of purulent material overlying joints and adjacent tissues, and abscesses in the subcutis (i.e., mid-deep layers of skin), as seen in the journal image on the next page.

Mycoplasma-associated polyarthritis has previously been documented in raccoons, but a formal description of lesions and the causative agent had not been published. *Mycoplasma*-associated joint disease in raccoons was **first documented** by Canadian researchers in 1981 in Ontario, Canada, when six orphaned animals under rehabilitation developed bone and joint inflammation. They isolated a *Mycoplasma* sp. from joint aspirates and used it to experimentally inoculate naïve raccoons. The researchers reproduced disease in raccoons <6 weeks of age but not in raccoons 12 weeks of age. In addition, from 2010-2012, SCWDS diagnosed *Mycoplasma*-associated polyarthritis in several very young raccoons from rehabilitation centers in Virginia and Kentucky. However, unlike these previous reports, three of the four raccoons in our current case series were adults. This suggests that both young (<6 weeks of age) and adult raccoons can develop this disease. Unique from the previous reports of this disease, the adult raccoons in our study presented with neurologic disease and three of the four raccoons had co-morbidities that may have contributed to their risk of development of *Mycoplasma*-associated disease. These comorbidities included canine distemper infection, amyloidosis, dental disease, and schistosomiasis, although amyloidosis most likely developed secondary to mycoplasmal or other infections.

Joint samples from these four raccoon cases were genetically characterized and two unique *Mycoplasma* genetic sequences were detected. The two *Mycoplasma* sequences were most similar to *Mycoplasma phocimorsus*, a seal-associated *Mycoplasma* species that has been associated with human infections after exposure to seals and brown bears. Exposure to infected tissue from such cases can cause a condition in humans known as 'seal finger', which is an infection most often acquired during the skinning process. While most cases of seal finger are restricted to lesions near the bite or cut site, septic infections are a possible sequela. Currently, it is unknown if the two raccoon *Mycoplasma* sequences detected in our study represent strains of *M. phocimorsus*, are *M. phocimorsus* and a novel species, or are two novel species. Although

Mycoplasma-associated polyarthritis in raccoons



Necropsy images of *Mycoplasma*-associated joint lesions in raccoons. Image originally **published** in **One Health**.
A) Skin reflected back revealing abundant purulent material in the subcutis of the reflected skin (black arrow) and along the lateral aspect of the knee (blue arrows);
B) Pus exuding from the left elbow (blue arrow) with scapula to the left (S);
C) Swollen left forelimb joint (black arrow) versus same joint on right foot;
D) Large abscess (A) over right the inguinal region near pelvic joint extending to the knee; abundant purulent exudate surrounds the abscess.

there are no samples available from the cases in Canada for comparison, our sequence from three of the current cases was identical to those from a 2010 case in a juvenile raccoon at a wildlife rehabilitation center in Virginia.

Historically, *Mycoplasma* species were considered host-specific, with low zoonotic potential, but there is increasing evidence of animal-to-human transmission for various *Mycoplasma* species. One of the most widespread and common zoonotic species is *M. phocimorsus*. Several hundred cases have been reported, primarily among seal hunters and people with occupational exposure to seals (e.g., wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians, captive seal keepers), although recent cases were associated with skinning a brown bear and a cat scratch. Currently there is no evidence that the raccoon-associated *Mycoplasma* is zoonotic, but best practice would be to carefully monitor any animal bites for infection and consider *Mycoplasma* infection if it does not respond to drug therapy that is known to be ineffective against *Mycoplasma* (e.g., beta-lactam antimicrobials). Cases of seal finger in humans have been successfully treated with tetracyclines.

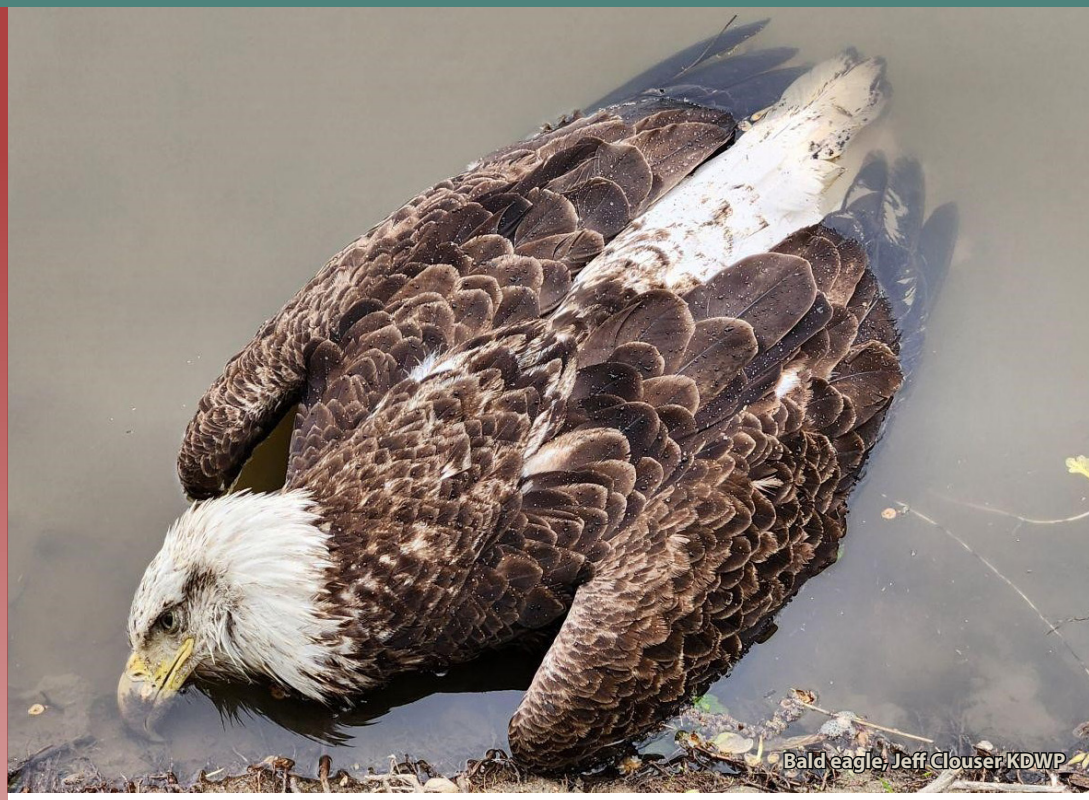
Collectively, these data suggest that *Mycoplasma*-associated arthritis occurs in both juvenile and adult raccoons and add to the growing list of free-ranging wildlife with *Mycoplasma*-associated joint disease (e.g., black vultures, striped skunks, bison, crocodilians). The significance of *Mycoplasma*-associated arthritis for free-ranging raccoon populations is unknown and further work is needed to determine if underlying conditions or coinfections are associated with the development of *Mycoplasma*-associated disease in raccoons and if the raccoon-infecting *Mycoplasma* are zoonotic.

Prepared by Michael Yabsley and Nicole Nemeth

Diagnostic Case Highlight

Lead toxicosis in a bald eagle

Lead toxicosis is a commonly diagnosed cause of death among scavenging birds such as bald eagles, and exposure typically occurs from ingestion of lead sources while feeding. An important source of lead exposure for bald eagles is incidental ingestion of spent ammunition in carcasses of harvested animals left on the landscape such as deer or animals shot for damage or predator control including species such as feral swine and coyotes. While lead toxicosis has been confirmed in many species of wildlife, scavenging species are often overrepresented because of their potential to accumulate lead in their tissues after consumption of contaminated carcasses over weeks, months, or potentially longer.

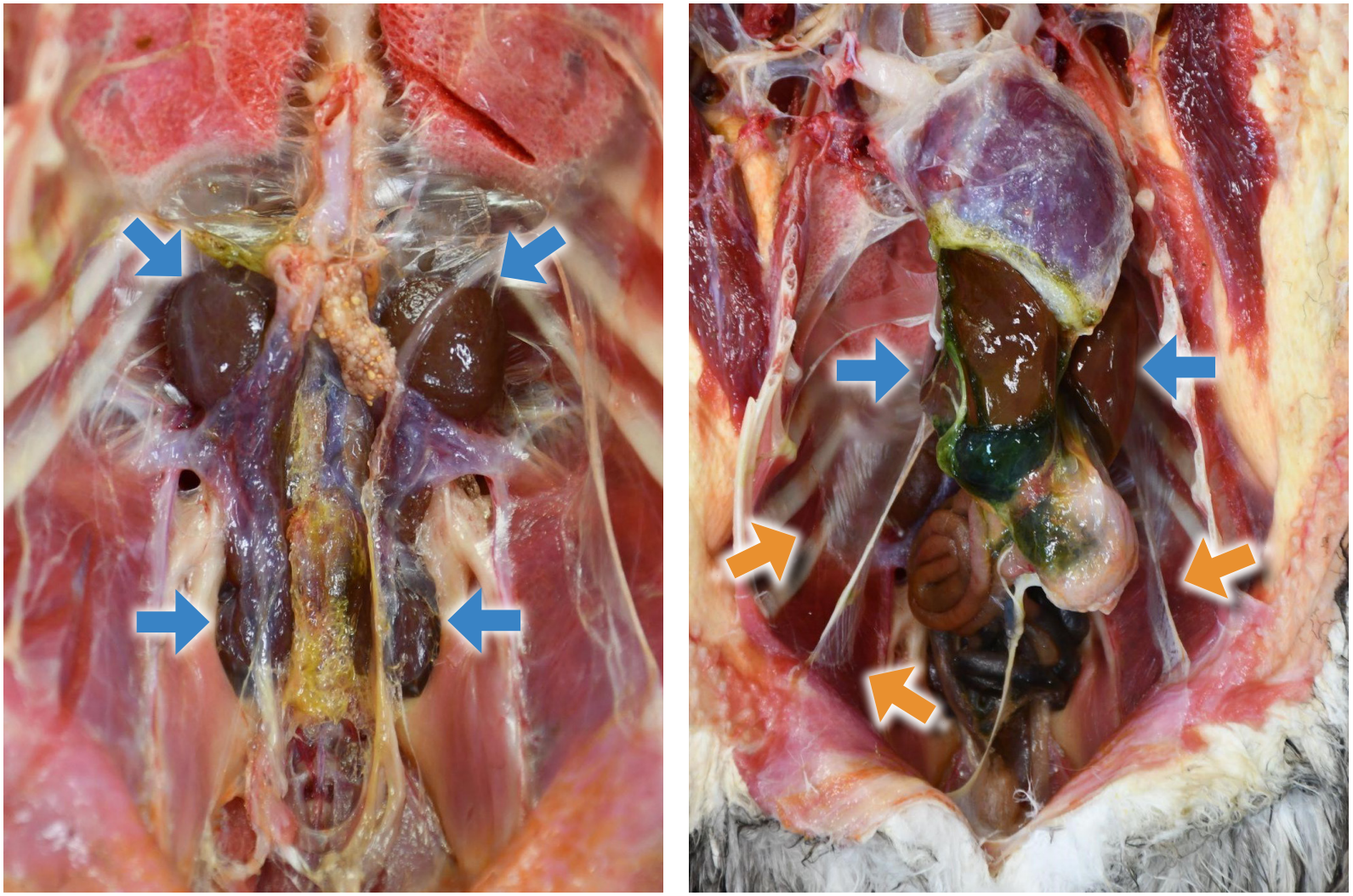


Bald eagle, Jeff Clouser KDWP

The carcass of an immature (estimated 3.5 years old), female bald eagle from Jefferson County, Kansas was submitted for postmortem examination by the **Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP)**. The bald eagle carcass was discovered in the water near the shoreline of Perry Reservoir as seen in the image above, and the carcass was collected on April 18, 2025.

External examination revealed that the feathers were covered in dust, and the tail feather tips were tattered and broken. The eagle was in poor nutritional condition, with severe muscle wasting, absent fat stores, and an empty digestive tract. Numerous organs, including the liver and kidneys, were atrophied or shrunken as evident in the images on the following page. Extensive pale areas were evident on both the epicardial (outer surface) and myocardial (inner surface) off the heart, as seen in the on page 12. Based on the species, field signs, and gross findings, lead toxicosis was suspected.

Lead toxicosis in a bald eagle



The blue arrows in the left image indicate mildly atrophied kidneys and mildly atrophied liver in the right image. Cloudy, prominent air sacs are indicated by orange arrows in the right image. Photos, SCWDS

A liver sample was submitted to the **California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System** at the **University of California-Davis** for heavy metal analysis. Liver lead level was 27 parts per million (ppm), a concentration consistent with lead toxicosis. Heightened states of emaciation and organ atrophy are also consistent with lead toxicosis. Together, these findings were consistent with chronic lead toxicosis in this bald eagle.

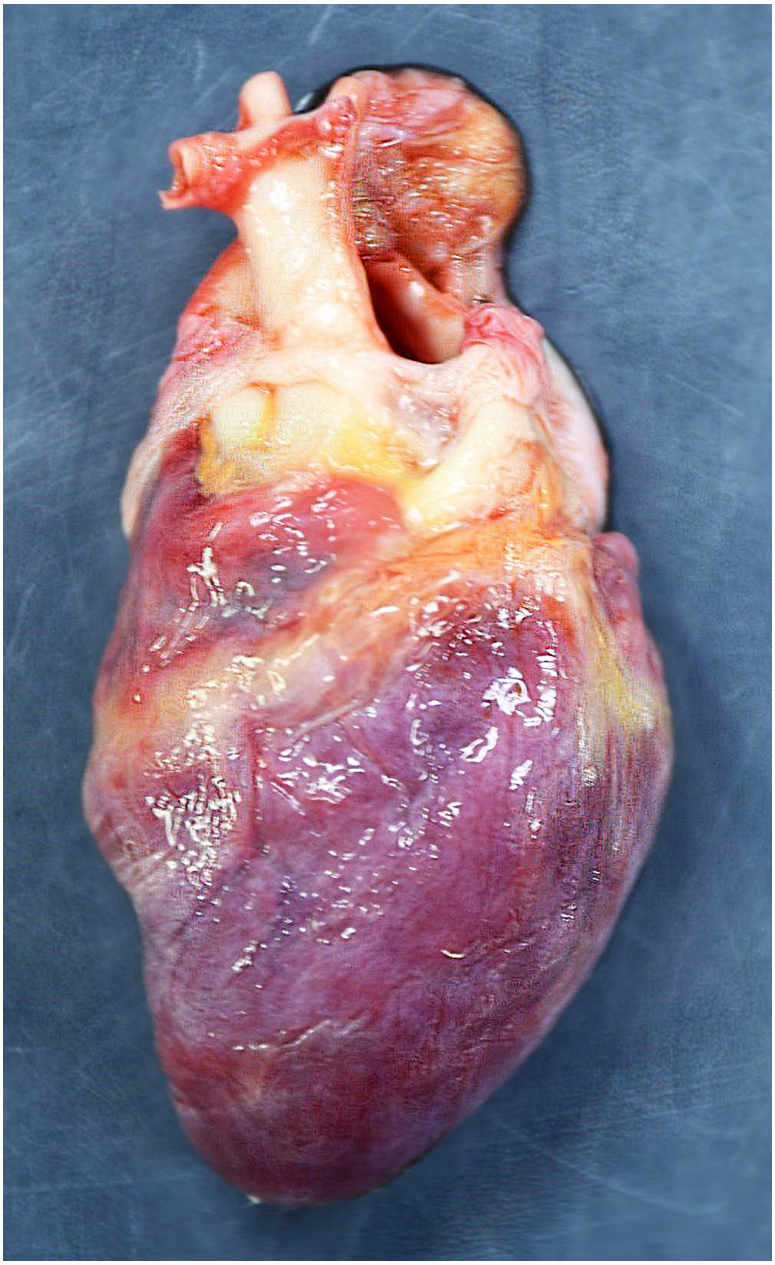
Pure lead, not naturally occurring in the environment, can be found in lead-based paint, petroleum products, mining sites, improperly disposed batteries, fishing tackle, and firearm ammunition. Lead is commonly used in ammunition because its density and malleability allow bullets to deform and fragment upon impact, increasing energy transfer within tissues. Small lead fragments can remain in carcass remnants or gut piles, and scavenging species, including bald eagles, may inadvertently ingest these particles during feeding. Lead fragments subsequently enter the gastrointestinal tract. Once in this acidic environment, especially in the proventriculus or the glandular stomach and ventriculus, commonly refered to as the gizzard, these fragments slowly dissolve and lead is absorbed into the bloodstream and distributed to other sites in the body. Lead toxicosis affects multiple organ systems, particularly the nervous and cardiovascular systems.

Lead toxicosis in a bald eagle

Lead toxicosis in wild birds typically has two primary presentations: acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term). The acute form often presents with paresis or weakness in the hind limbs or paralysis, dull mental status, wing droop and bowed head, visual impairment, labored breathing, and bright green feces that are sometimes observed on the feathers around the vent. The chronic form is characterized by poor nutritional condition, anemia, which is a low proportion of red blood cells, heart dysfunction, and generalized weakness. Severe lead intoxication may also be associated with bleeding and necrosis or cell death in the brain, which may be seen histologically. Both the acute and chronic forms of lead toxicosis can lead to starvation and death. Lead toxicosis is a population-level health concern in bald eagles. One study reported that between 1975 and 2013, trauma and poisonings were the leading causes of death for bald eagles in the United States, and lead toxicosis accounted for 63.5% of all poisonings. Additionally, a **recent publication** and **others** indicated that continued poisoning at the observed levels would suppress bald eagle population growth rates by 3.8%.

As predators and scavengers, bald eagles play an important role in ecosystem health, and their feeding behavior places them at risk for environmental toxicant (as well as pathogen) exposures. Continued research and monitoring remain important tools in understanding and managing these risks. We would like to express our gratitude to Jeff Clouser with KDWP for submitting this case to the **SCWDS Research and Diagnostic Service**.

Kaysi Macon, Tori Andreasen, Aidan O'Reilly, Mark Ruder, and Nicole Nemeth



The epicardium, or the outermost layer of the heart, containing numerous areas of pallor that coalesce. Photo, SCWDS

Changing faces at SCWDS


Eastern lubber grasshopper, B. Kurimo-Beechuk

The SCWDS family tree, with branches all over the world, continues to change and grow. In recent months, we have had several new staff and students join the SCWDS team.

Sydney Cottingham joins SCWDS as a diagnostician and veterinary anatomic pathology resident. Sydney obtained her MS from the University of Florida studying gastrointestinal parasites of free-ranging and captive white-tailed deer. Previously, she studied gastrointestinal parasites of Lesser Scaup, and conducted capture-based disease surveillance in a variety of wildlife species at Louisiana State University. She obtained her DVM at the University of Florida in 2025.

Cara StewartBuck is a research paraprofessional and graduate student in the UGA Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources working with Dr's Ania Majewska and Chris Cleveland, assisting with pathogen surveillance at pig wallows. Cara has a varied background including field work, avian research, trail maintenance, and quantitative modeling. She received her BS in Wildlife, Fisheries, and Aquaculture from the College of Forest Resources at Mississippi State University.

Audrey Sandoval is a PhD graduate student working in the SCWDS virology laboratory under the direction of Dr's Becky Poulson and Dave Stallknecht. Before joining SCWDS, Audrey was a research associate at Colorado State University (CSU) studying chronic wasting disease at the Prion Research Center. She obtained her BS in Microbiology from CSU.

Sathwik Katkam is an MS computer science graduate student and is working as a research assistant with Dr. Ania Majewska. His work focuses on applying statistical modeling to white-tailed deer herd health data to study disease patterns. He previously worked as a software development engineer and served as a teaching assistant in systems programming at UGA. He completed his BTech in Electronics and Computer Engineering from Sreenidhi Institute of Science and Technology in Hyderabad, India.

Allison Shaulis joins SCWDS as a PhD graduate student in Dr. Ania Majewska's laboratory studying how the environment shapes infection dynamics and behavior in monarch butterflies. She previously worked at USDA-ARS studying honey bee health and disease and received her BS in Animal Science from the University of Maryland.

Alison Garland is a PhD graduate student in Dr.

Changing faces at SCWDS


Eastern lubber grasshopper, B. Kurimo-Beechuk

Ania Majewska's laboratory researching feral pig movement, behavior, and species interactions. She received her BS Biotechnology from the University of Florida.

Annabel Coyle is working in Dr. Becky Poulson's laboratory as a PhD student studying the epidemiology and viral dynamics of avian influenza viruses. Her research background includes topics such as disease ecology of *Mycoplasma* in house finches, model development of human influenza transmission, and immune response to La Crosse virus. She received her BS in Biological Sciences from Virginia Tech.

Ella Owen is a PhD student in Dr. Ania Majewska's laboratory studying the role of feral swine and wildlife in the accumulation of infectious agents in the environment at various sites across Georgia. She previously studied honey bee health in Delaware. Ella received a BS in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation and Insect Ecology and Conservation from the University of Delaware.

Kira Buford-Rucker joins SCWDS and the UGA College of Veterinary Medicine as a joint PhD/DVM student. Her PhD research is taking shape but will focus on infectious disease ecology. As an undergraduate, Kira was engaged in alligator and fish research at the Savannah River Ecology Lab. She obtained her BS from Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina.

Jake Shurba worked as a research professional and assisted with avian influenza virus research and surveillance activities. Jake moved on to begin a PhD at Clemson University.

Marcelo Jorge was a postdoctoral researcher working on a wild turkey pathogen surveillance project with North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. In 2025, Marcelo accepted a faculty position at UGA as Assistant Professor at the UGA Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources.

Morgan Grey worked as a research professional and assisted with avian influenza virus research and surveillance activities. She is currently a quality laboratory specialist at Creature Comforts Brewing Company in Athens, Georgia.

Mattie Green worked as a research technician on a collaborative bat health project. After the project ended, Mattie started a Masters of Public Health at Pennsylvania State University in Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

Prepared by Betsy Kurimo-Beechuk

SCWDS BRIEFS

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Parting views from the Southeast

Yellow-throated warbler, N. Friedeman