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CERVIDAE HEALTH RESEARCH INITIATIVE

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Message from the Director

September is a busy yet unpredictable time of year for deer farmers. Many farmers are weaning fawns while hemorrhagic disease is at its peak and hurricanes threaten to hit anywhere in Florida. Here at UF IFAS CHERI, we are working to bring you the best information possible about the predictable and unpredictable challenges that the deer farming industry faces. In this issue Dr. Juan Campos provides tips about best weaning practices, we highlight some new research underway, and introduce you to some of our newest CHERI staff.

Thank you, always, for your support - *Sam*

Dr. Samantha Wisely
Director, CHERI

The Importance of Weaning in Farmed Deer Health

By: Dr. Juan M. Campos Krauer

Weaning is a critical stage in deer management, not only for growth and development but also for the health and survival of fawns. At this stage, young deer are transitioning from reliance on maternal antibodies, received through colostrum and milk, to producing their own immune defenses. This natural decline in maternal protection creates a temporary “immunity gap,” during which fawns are more vulnerable to infections.

In Florida, this occurs in late summer and early fall, which coincides with peak transmission of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (EHDV) and Bluetongue Virus (BTV). As a result, poorly managed weaning can increase stress and susceptibility to these viral diseases, with potentially high impacts on farm productivity and herd health.



Suggestions for a Smooth Weaning Process:

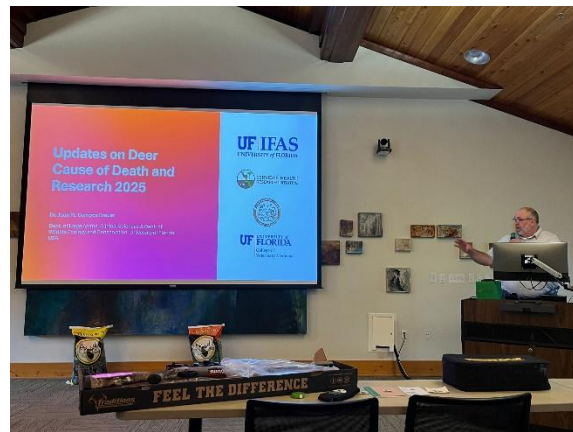
- Plan to wean before peak disease season: Adjust timing to reduce overlap with EHDV/BTV transmission peaks.
- Minimize stress: Use low-stress handling methods, provide familiar feed and water sources, and avoid overcrowding.
- Provide high-quality nutrition: Ensure diets are balanced with adequate protein, energy, and minerals to support immune function.
- Maintain good biosecurity: Reduce insect exposure (midges) and keep facilities clean and well-drained and observe fawns daily for any signs of illness.

Remember that there is a vaccine available to protect your deer, including weaning fawns, against the two most common serotypes of EHDV. Although it can be challenging to administer the two required doses to young deer, our CHeRI data show that the vaccine can be highly effective. For more information, you can reach out to Ashley Petersen (ashley.petersen@medgenelabs.com) from MedGene.

Properly managed weaning combined with preventive vaccination supports healthier animals, enhances growth and strengthens resilience against seasonal disease threats.

CHeRI in the Wild

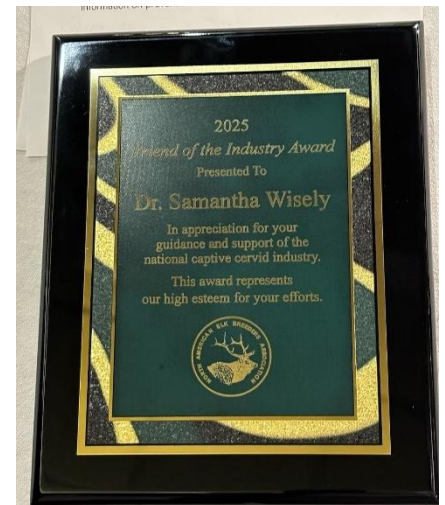
The August 2026 SeTDA BBQ was co-hosted by UF|IFAS CHeRI and was another successful event! CHeRI Director Dr. Sam Wisely and Dr. Juan Campos-Krauer gave updates on CHeRI research while new PhD student Miranda Imeri, discussed her proposed research with forages and deer nutrition. Returning CHeRI member Dr. Kristin Sloyer gave a presentation on implementing misting systems into farm IPMs. Dr. Diane Kitchen from FDACS gave an important presentation on the emerging threat of New World Screwworm.





Friend of the Industry Award!

Please help us congratulate our director Sam Wisely for receiving this well-deserved recognition for her hard work in CHeRI and the captive cervid industry for over a decade. The Friend of the Industry Award comes from the North American Elk Breeders Association in recognition of Dr. Wisely being a leading voice in the study of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease which impacts not only white-tailed deer but elk as well.



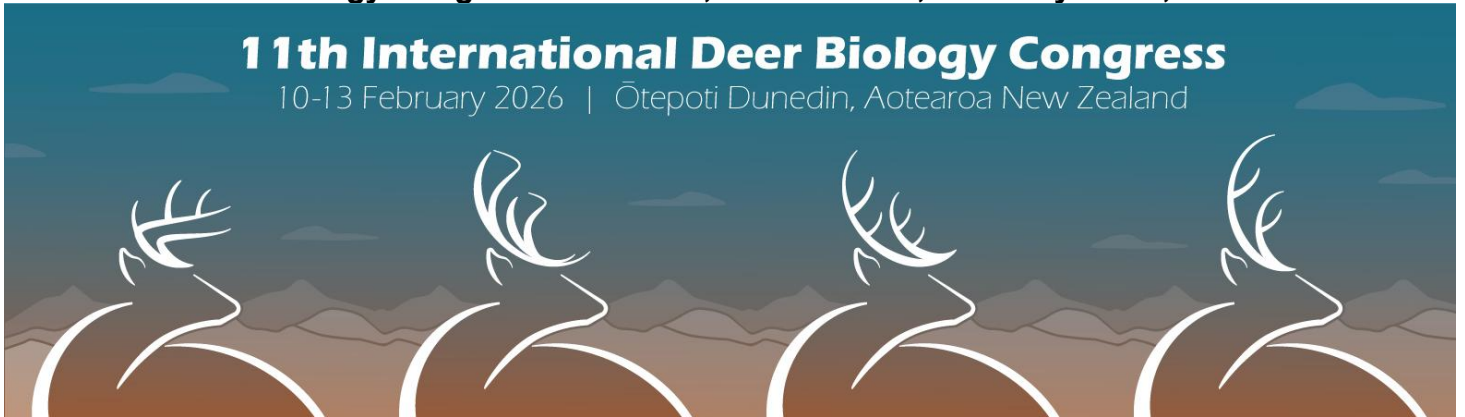
Hemorrhagic Disease Testing- Second Quarter

This summer, we experienced an EHDV-2 outbreak in the Florida Panhandle between June and July. In total we received 86 submissions for HD testing, with 20 being EHDV-2 positive and 2 BTV positive. As we head into the next months, we expect an increase in submissions and HD cases. Now is the time to stay vigilant and monitor your herd for the ongoing "HD season." You can browse our informational resources on our website [here](#), call our deer hotline (352-562-3337), or ask a question through our [submission form](#) on our website.

Total Submissions (send-in/necropsies)	Total unique farms	Total EHDV cases	Total BTV cases	Total other virus cases
86	24	20	2	7

Upcoming Events

11th Annual Deer Biology Congress – Dunedin, New Zealand, February 10-13, 2026



Many CHeRI researchers will be at the [11th International Deer Biology Congress](#) next year in New Zealand, where we will share our work within CHeRI to other cervid researchers from around the globe! We will share more research updates in the next newsletter.

CHeRI Spotlight!

Mackenzie Jensen - Necropsy Technician

Hey, I'm Mackenzie! I'm originally from Minnesota, but for the next year I'll be a necropsy technician with CHeRI. As such, I will be conducting deer necropsies and collecting samples to help determine the cause of death and any possible diseases present in farmed deer all over the state.

I just graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology. During my time there, in addition to job experiences and interacting with wildlife professionals, I have cultivated an interest in wildlife disease on the individual level and population level. Outside of work, I like hiking, birding, and painting. I'm looking forward to getting to know the deer farming community down here in Florida!



Returning CHeRI Members

Kristin Sloyer - CHeRI Postdoc



Kristin Sloyer has previously worked with CHeRI from 2016 to 2018 for her MS degree, and again in 2022 as a post-doctoral scientist. She recently returned to CHeRI in June of this year after a two-year postdoc at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, TX where she conducted field studies for an NIH-funded project investigating emerging arboviral threats in the Americas. Her work primarily focused on potential for spillover of mosquito-transmitted arboviruses in the Brazilian Pantanal. She is excited to be back with CHeRI to investigate the potential for insecticide misting systems to be integrated into best management practices used at Florida deer farms. Building on the work of Vilma Cooper, Kristin will determine the best time to apply insecticides to decrease deer from exposure to EHDV and BTV.

Yasmin Tavares - CHeRI HD Diagnostics



I am so excited to be back working with CHeRI! I worked here from 2018-2020 during my undergraduate degree at UF in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. When I graduated I moved to Vero Beach to do my Master's in Medical Entomology at UF Florida Medical Entomology Lab. I then worked for a few years with birds, bugs, and reptiles in New York City, and now I am back in Sam Wisely's lab! I will oversee the HD diagnostic testing we provide to y'all, as well as extension work that includes social media posts, infographics, and putting together this newsletter - so keep an eye out for those and [send us an email](#) if you have any questions you'd like us to answer!

Ship us your specimens!

Are you experiencing an abnormal level of mortality of deer on your farm? Are you outside of Florida or want to necropsy your animal yourself? You can ship us samples for testing. We accept biological samples from live and dead animals, but it's critically important that the samples are collected, stored, and shipped correctly. Improperly prepared samples yield poor or no results. Call us prior to collecting specimens to determine which sample(s) to collect and how to store it. We will work with your

veterinarian or your farm manager to ensure that the right sample is collected. Proper shipping and notification will ensure your sample stays viable for testing and that no cost is incurred by the shipper.

Call **352-562-3337** if you have any questions about requirements when sending CHeRI a specimen.

And remember, if your farm is in Florida, we will come to your farm, perform a necropsy on the deceased animal, and provide diagnostic results for free! All results are confidential.

Contact Us:

Email: ufifas.cheri@gmail.com

EHD Hotline Phone: 352-562-DEER

Website: <https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/cheri/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UFIFAS.CHeRI/>

Twitter: [@UF_IFAS_CHeRI](https://twitter.com/UF_IFAS_CHeRI)

