CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

CERVIDAE HEALTH RESEARCH INITIATIVE

www.wec.ifas.ufl.edu/cheri | ufifas.cheri@gmail.com

Volume 10, Issue 4, December 2025

Message from the Director

The end of the year brings time for reflection and gratitude. The CHeRI family would like to thank each and every deer farmer that works with us. Whether you have used our diagnostic services, taken a survey, visited us at our SeTDA booth, or let your Florida representative know that we are important to you, your support and continued trust in us is the fuel that keeps CHeRI running.

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

Dr. Samantha Wisely
Director, CHeRI

Advice from Dr. Juan

Special Care for Young, Weaned Deer This Fall and Winter

After weaning, farmed white-tailed deer require careful management to ensure a healthy transition and growth. Young, and weaned deer must have constant access to clean water and a balanced diet that includes high-quality pelleted feed and forage for fiber. Key factors such as herd size, pen layout, and proximity to other age groups are vital to maintaining herd stability. Grouping deer of similar age and size helps reduce competition, stress, and potential bullying among them. Minimizing stress is the most critical aspect of post-weaning young deer.

It is important to closely monitor young deer for any signs of illness or injury and to keep facilities well-maintained to reduce potential disease transmission. Long-term CHeRI monitoring and data indicate that the 4 to12 month age group is the most vulnerable to hemorrhagic diseases Epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV) and bluetongue virus (BTV). During this developmental stage, young deer encounter many pathogens, both bacterial and viral, for the first time, making a healthy and strong immune system essential to handle the threats.

Diet and Feeding

One key factor for healthy deer with a strong immune system is nutrition. When your young, weaned deer transition to a new management, including diet, it's extremely important to introduce changes gradually. A slow shift allows their rumen microbiota to adapt, which helps prevent digestive upset. To ensure adequate fiber intake, provide high-quality forage, such as alfalfa or other legume hay, and offer access to natural browses whenever possible.

Be cautious with high-starch feeds. Excessive corn consumption can increase the risk of ruminal acidosis, bloat, and enterotoxemia caused by Clostridium perfringens type D. Additionally, salt and mineral supplements are essential. Maintaining the proper balance of macro and trace minerals supports bone growth, metabolic stability, reproductive development, antler growth, and, most importantly, a strong immune system.

Health Considerations

Young deer are particularly vulnerable to hemorrhagic diseases such as EHDV and BTV, respiratory diseases like bacterial pneumonia, and disturbances caused by digestive and internal parasites, which can lead to diarrhea and anemia. Many of these issues can be prevented or minimized through vaccination, routine veterinary treatments, proper nutrition, and thoughtful management practices. For this to work fast and effectively, it’s important to establish a strong professional relationship with your veterinarian to ensure quick access to treatment options and to create a health plan that includes vaccination and deworming schedules.

Common health issues to be aware of in young deer aged 4 to 12 months

Hemorrhagic diseases: EHDV and BTV. Animals in this category are unfortunately among the most vulnerable to viral diseases. Currently, Medgene Labs has produced an EHDV vaccine that is approved for use in whitetail deer and elk, offering protection against the two most common serotypes, 2 and 6. However, there is still no approved BTV vaccine for use in Whitetail deer in Florida. The only strategy to combat this disease once the animal is infected is through supportive treatment.

Respiratory Disease (Pneumonia): Coughing, nasal discharge, labored breathing. Management requires prompt veterinary diagnosis and persistent antibiotic treatment to fully clear the infection. If caught late, the treatment can be complicated and ineffective.

Coccidiosis: Bloody diarrhea. Confirm with a fecal exam and treat with anticoccidials, such as Corid, under veterinary guidance. Keep facilities clean, provide fresh water, and avoid contaminating food with feces.

Clostridial Diseases: Can cause sudden death. Discuss vaccination strategies with your veterinarian, especially for Clostridium perfringens type D, and C with a veterinarian. It is important to mention that Clostridium bacteria, such as C. perfringens, primarily cause disease through their potent toxins rather than through the bacteria themselves. A toxoid vaccine inactivates the toxins while preserving their structure, allowing the immune system to recognize them and produce neutralizing antibodies. Since the toxin is similar across different species, it is assumed that any ruminant including deer can benefit if it receives a toxoid vaccine.

Internal Parasites: Causes poor growth, weight loss, weaken the immune system. Work with your veterinarian to create a deworming plan based on fecal examinations, your farm's location, and the category of deer. It's essential to use the appropriate dewormers and dosages to enhance effectiveness and prevent parasite resistance.

With all these suggestions and information, we wish you good luck with your young deer, we hope they do well.

Happy holidays and a prosperous New Year 2026.

By: Dr. Juan M. Campos Krauer

New Resources to Keep your Herd Safe!

Deer Pox Virus

We have seen numerous cases of mule deerpox virus around Florida this year. This virus can have a devastating impact on newborn fawns. Read more about it and how to control it: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW519

Chronic Wasting Disease

A second case of CWD was recently detected in Holmes County in early October this year. The road-killed doe was found less than a mile from the first detection. Fortunately, the positive animal was close enough to the first positive case that there has been no change in the surveillance or quarantine zones. To read more about CWD, please read: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/UW529

New World Screwworm

The New World Screwworm is a pest to livestock and could threaten the deer farming industry. Learn more about it and discover the best management strategies you can take: https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/IN1146

CHeRI Out and About

CHeRI goes international – Our director, Dr. Sam Wisely, finished her Fullbright Scholar Program for the 2024-2025 year in Republic of Serbia! Dr. Sam visited deer farms in Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. Understanding deer farming from an international lens can help us improve our approaches here in Florida and create trade partnerships globally. We will keep you updated as publication from this work come out!

CHeRI at the Entomological Society of America 2025 Annual Meeting – Drs. Nathan Burkett-Cadena, Kristin Sloyer, and Vilma Montenegro attended EntSoc 2025 conference in Portland, OR this year and gave great presentations on our current biting midges studies in Florida. Our CHeRI entomology team has made great strides in understanding which vectors carry hemorrhagic disease viruses, how midges interact with deer, and the best practices to reduce midges on farms. Stay tuned for exciting resources.

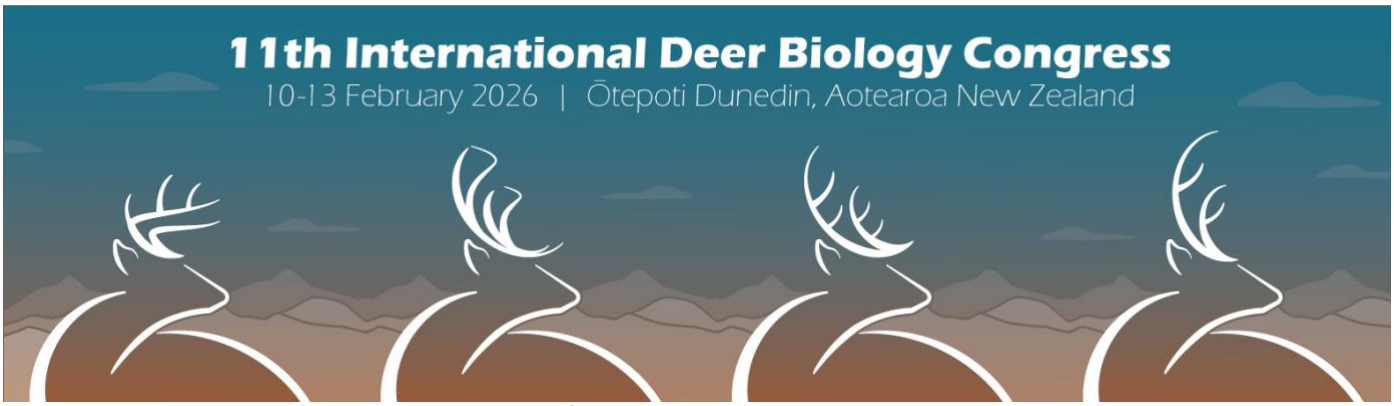
Hemorrhagic Disease Testing

This fall we saw many cases of BTV around the state - in contrast to the summer when EHDV-2 emerged in north Florida. In total, we received 147 submissions for HD testing: 20 were BTV positive, 22 were EHDV-2, and 1 was EHDV-6 positive. As we head into the winter months, we expect less HD activity around Florida. Have questions? As always, 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
147	30	23	20	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 cervid researchers from around the world will share research, management techniques and best practices. CHeRI is proud to represent the Florida deer farming community to the world.

2026 SeTDA Spring Fling

Mark your calendars! 2026 SeTDA Spring Fling will happen next March 6-7, 2026 in Orlando! CHeRI will be there with a booth and many of our scientists will be attending.

2026 NADeFA Conference

NADeFA is March 18-21 this year. Dr. Sam and Dr. Juan will be there. Come visit us at our booth!

2025 CHeRI Graduates!

Please help us celebrate our 2025 graduates!

CHeRI Spotlight!

Raphaella Paes Lopez - Lab and Field Technician

I was born and raised in Florida. I have both B.S. Biomedical Sciences and M.S. Biotechnology degrees from University of Central Florida. I have a background in parasitology as I did my master's thesis in malaria drug discovery. I'm happy to be part of CHeRI, and excited to explore my interests in disease and entomology and learn new things! Outside of the lab, I love going to the beach, hiking, trying new foods, and raising caterpillars. I'm a lab & field technician at UF IFAS Florida Medical Entomology Lab. I am assisting Drs. Nathan Burkett-Cadena and Sloyer conduct research on the best time to apply pesticide for controlling midges. My role is to set up pesticide misting systems on Florida deer farms, and trap mosquitoes and Culicoides spp. for vector identification.

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