



# CERVIDAE HEALTH RESEARCH INITIATIVE

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## Message from the Director

Thanks to all of you who have contacted us to tell us about your deer farm. We love to hear about what works well and what your biggest hurdles are. One thing we consistently hear about is high numbers of fawn deaths, particularly at this time year. We at CHeRI are working hard to help increase fawn survival. Current projects include investigating causes and cures for fawn pneumonia, the impact of tick-borne diseases, and vaccines specific to fawn illnesses. Your other big concern: EHD (epizootic hemorrhagic disease). We have seen just a couple of suspect cases so far, and let's keep our fingers crossed that we have few cases this year. In the future, we hope that we will have more to help deer farmers than just luck. We are currently evaluating currently available commercial vaccines, working with pharmaceutical companies to develop better vaccines, and helping you diagnose EHD when it happens. Remember, if you have a deer that you think died or is ill from EHD, call our hotline. We will provide diagnostic testing for free!

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

Dr. Samantha Wisely  
Director, CHeRI



## Focus on Vaccine Studies

In January 2016, CHeRI researchers began a field trial of the widely used killed virus, autogenous vaccine for EHD manufactured by Newport Laboratories. Twenty-five adult white-tailed deer from a single herd were vaccinated with the Cervid Combination Vaccine using Newport's guidelines. These animals were matched in age, sex and genetics to 25 animals that were not vaccinated and kept in the same pens. To understand if the vaccine protects animals for EHD and bluetongue, all fifty animals will be bled before, during and after vaccination and boosters. If the vaccine works, we expect higher antibody production for EHD -1, -2, and -6, and bluetongue, and fewer deaths in vaccinated animals. This is the first time the vaccine has been tested using matched animals from the same herd. The study concludes in January 2017. Looking ahead, we are already in the development phase of designing a new live attenuated vaccine for EHD that should provide better protection for a broader variety of HD's. By submitting samples to us from your sick deer, you help us design a better vaccine.

## Free Diagnostic Testing!

### Call our Hotline: 352-562-DEER

If you own a deer farm in Florida, we would like to test sick or dead animals that you suspect have epizootic hemorrhagic disease or bluetongue, commonly known as HD. We will provide necropsy results for free and those results will be completely confidential. This effort will help our researchers determine which HD viruses are circulating in different areas of Florida, will provide information on important coinfections that may increase mortality, and ultimately will help us develop new and better vaccines for HD.



If you have a dead or sick animal, there are several ways you can get us samples:

- 1) If you work with a veterinarian, we can negotiate a reimbursement rate for providing us with the needed tissues. Please call the hotline and provide us with your veterinarian's name and phone number.
- 2) If you have a cold room and can keep the carcass cold, but do not want to necropsy the animal, we can send someone out to collect tissues. Call the hotline and we will come to your farm!
- 3) If you would like to collect tissues yourself, we can provide directions and will have an instructional video coming out soon! If you need a collection kit, like the ones provided at the most recent SETDFA meeting please call the hotline and we will mail one to you!

## Student Spotlight: Bethany McGregor, Entomologist in training!

Bethany McGregor is a Ph.D. student studying Entomology at the Florida Medical Entomology Lab at the University of Florida. Her research is focused on studying the ecology of the biting midges responsible for transmitting EHD and bluetongue. One aspect of this work is determining which of the more than 20 species of *Culicoides* midge in Florida prefers to feed on deer. By extracting DNA from a midge's blood meal, Bethany can determine the species of animal that were fed on by an individual midge! Understanding which midge species are responsible for HD's is vital to creating a comprehensive and effective pest management program. Originally from Tennessee, Bethany completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. She then continued on to complete a Master of Science degree in Biology at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Her future goals are to continue doing research on insect vectors of disease and to pursue a teaching career at a university.



## Contact Us:

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