



Badger Poll™ #2, Release 4  
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CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE  
by G. Donald Ferree, Jr.

Chronic Wasting Disease has been in the news of late. The most recent Badger Poll™, conducted by the University of Wisconsin (Madison) Survey Center addressed public awareness of this situation and reaction to it on a number of dimensions. This survey was made possible by private funds made available by the UW-Madison Chancellor's Office and University Communications. The Capital Times was media sponsor for the survey.

Hunting is often thought of as part of the culture of Wisconsin, and this survey suggests that "common wisdom" is accurate. More than four in ten residents (43%) answered "yes" in response to the question "does anyone in your household hunt". This holds across all age groups, save for those sixty and older, among whom the figure drops from the one in two elsewhere evident to just under one in four. Men as a group were almost half again as likely as women to answer in the affirmative, but more than one in three women lives in a household with a hunter (who might of course, be herself).

If one focuses on whether individuals would "describe yourself as a hunter", the prevalence drops some. Still, more than one in four (27%) overall say "yes". This figure includes just under half (49%) of all the men surveyed, but only 6% of the women. The proportion varies as well by age, starting off at one in four among the youngest, and rising to one in three of those in the next oldest group, and then falls off some. But even among those sixty and older, almost one in five call themselves hunters. (It turns out that for both of these measures, Democrats are least likely to have personal involvement in "hunting culture" with Independents most. But much of this is related to the greater tendency of women to call themselves Democrats.

For many of the questions which follow, we will consider several groups: first those who hunt themselves; secondly those who either do so or report that someone in their household does hunt; finally those who neither hunt nor say there is a hunter in their household. These groups make up 27%, 45% and 55% of all respondents, respectively. Those with a "hunter in the family" includes both those who hunt themselves and those who say there was a hunter in the household.

Chronic Wasting Disease has been a matter of media attention for a while. Overall, just over four in ten (41%) of all residents say they have been paying "a lot" of attention to this condition in deer. Adding in the more than one in three (36%) who are paying "some", accounts for just over three residents in four. That leaves fewer than one in four who are paying either "only a little"

attention or "none at all".

One's own contact with hunting is related to this. Almost two thirds of those who describe themselves as hunters (64%) are paying "a lot" of attention. This trails off to just under six in ten among those with a hunter in the household (ignoring whether or not the respondent hunts him- or her-self. Those with no connection manifest a lower level of attention, but still one that compares well with the amount of attention residents are paying, say, to the candidates running for Governor (where 8% were paying a lot, and 36% some). Men as a group are half again as likely as women to be paying a lot of attention. Stated attention rises with age for the first three groups and then modestly falls back. In any event, the high level of attention bears witness to the role hunting plays here in the Badger State.

Being aware of the problem is not the same as being pleased with what is underway at the state level. Asked to use the standard "excellent to good" four point scale to rate the job the state has been doing handling this problem, just under half award a grade of either excellent (8%) or good (38%). Contrariwise, a similar proportion opts for the lower ratings of fair (31%) or poor (15%). The balance is similar for men and women, although the former are a bit more likely to take an "extreme" position at either end of the scale. Patterns based on age or partisanship are weak. Beyond a tendency for those more involved in hunting to take a (very) modestly more extreme view, this factor two fails to display any sharp patterns.

There is a general satisfaction with the place of this issue on the agenda. Overall, two thirds (67%) say the state is paying "the right amount of attention" to this problem. Those voicing discontent in either direction are in rough balance: 12% say too much attention is being paid; 16% say too little is. Democrats are very slightly more likely to voice discontent, but this is clearly not much of a partisan issue. Only among those thirty to forty-five are there differences of more than a few points (they are more likely to see too little attention being paid), these distinctions are modest. Contact with hunting similarly seems not to predict one's answers at all well.

Respondents were reminded of the state's plan to "kill off the entire wild deer herd in parts of the state to stop the disease from spreading further" and asked for their reaction. Six in ten are in favor (21% strongly, 38% somewhat). One in three are opposed (14% strongly, 21% somewhat). On balance, women -- who often tend to have greater health-related concerns -- seem to be at least as favorable as men, although they are more likely to stake out one of the two middle positions (either favor somewhat or oppose somewhat). Backing is weaker among Democrats than for either Independents or Republicans. The youngest respondents are a bit more likely to favor the plan, but the similarity of views is most notable across the demographic constituencies. Opinion moves from an even split among those who hunt themselves to narrow acceptance among those with a hunter in the household. Among those with no direct connection to hunting, opinion breaks more than two to one in favor.

Favoring the plan is not necessarily the same as thinking that it will work in its goal "to stop the disease from spreading throughout Wisconsin". Overall, only four in ten are somewhat confident (38%) or very confident (2%) that it will achieve its intended result. More than half express either "only a little" confidence (28%) or none at all (27%).

Confidence is especially hard to come by among hunters, only about one fourth of whom are at least somewhat confident. Indeed among this group, the plurality of some four in ten is not confident at all. Counting in those who have a

family (or personal) connection increases the proportion at least somewhat confident to one in three. Among those with no family or personal link, just over four in ten are "somewhat confident" or better, but this is scarcely a ringing endorsement.

Women are more hopeful than men. Partisan patterns are flat. Only among the youngest group is a majority at least somewhat confident. But each of the groups, as for the population as a whole, a fair number of people seem to feel that the "eradication" may be worth trying, even as they are less than convinced that it will work.

What of personal impact? One potential effect of the attention to CWD is a reluctance to consume venison. Respondents were asked specifically about the impact of "the attention paid to CWD" on their own willingness to eat venison killed by a local hunter. Overall, half of all respondents (53%) said it had not made any difference one way or the other. On the other hand, four in ten said it had made them more reluctant to eat venison from such a source (27% much less willing, 15% somewhat so). Only a handful (2%) claimed to be more willing to eat deer killed by a local hunter (even though in theory, the attention to hygiene and testing COULD make such consumption objectively safer in some circumstances). Roughly six in ten of those with connection to hunting reported no impact on their willingness to eat venison, which figure dropped only to one in two among those with neither a personal nor family link. There was, however, some evidence of increasing doubts as the connection to hunting became less direct. Thus, one in three hunters were less willing (mostly somewhat so), four in ten of those with some connection (evenly split between somewhat and much less willing), and the figure was almost half (mostly much less willing) among those without a connection. Women admitted to more reluctance than men, and older respondents manifested modestly more concern than younger ones. All this however, it must be noted in the context that for every group, the most common position was to deny any impact.

One other potential effect is on the eagerness to go hunting. Respondents were asked (depending on whether they reported being hunters themselves) either about their own willingness to go hunting for deer or to answer concerning "the hunter you know best". Similar to the previous question, the largest group (some 56%) denied any real impact. One in three reported lower likelihood of going after deer (19% somewhat, 13% much less).

One's own connection with hunting played a role here. Three in four hunters (and almost as many when the group was enlarged to include those with a family connection) reported no real change. The proportion among those without a connection dropped to under half (although a number volunteered that they knew no deer hunter and so could not answer the question). This meant that roughly one in four hunters are less likely to go hunting themselves. Of course this also means that appear that the chance to "help out" in the eradication program has not translated into an increase in willingness to hunt.

Looking to more demographic distinctions, men are slightly more likely to deny impact for themselves or hunters they are familiar with than are women, but there is no sharp gender distinction. Reported impact grows modestly as one moves up through the first three age groups, then plateaus for the oldest group.

Overall, then, this issues seems to have captured a fair degree of attention, especially in the abstract. Wisconsin residents are paying some mind to CWD. Their assessment of what is being done to combat it might be characterized as general acceptance if not enthusiasm. But this is coupled with a fair degree of uncertainty about whether the problem in fact can be contained. There is also





CWD06: Has the attention to CWD made you much more willing to eat venison killed by a local hunter, somewhat more willing, somewhat less willing, much less willing, or hasn't it made any difference?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				HUNTING		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	SLF	FAM	NOT
MUCH MORE WILLING	*%	*%	--%	--%	--%	*%	--%	--%	--%	1%	*%	*%	--%
SOMEWHAT MORE WILLING	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	2	*	3	2	1	2
SOMEWHAT LESS WILLING	15	18	13	13	13	17	22	14	14	15	20	20	12
MUCH LESS WILLING	27	23	31	32	24	26	16	24	32	29	15	20	33
NOT MADE DIFFERENCE	53	56	50	52	58	51	60	58	51	49	61	57	50
DON'T KNOW	2	1	4	*	2	3	--	2	3	4	2	2	3
REFUSED	*	--	*	1	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	*

CWD07: And has it made (you yourself/the hunter you know best) much more likely to go hunting for deer, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely, much less likely or hasn't it made any difference?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				HUNTING		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	SLF	FAM	NOT
MUCH MORE LIKELY TO GO	*%	--%	*%	*%	1%	--%	--%	--%	--%	*%	--%	--%	*%
SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY	2	3	2	2	1	5	--	3	3	3	2	2	3
SOMEWHAT LESS LIKELY	19	21	18	17	21	21	20	17	19	22	16	17	21
MUCH LESS LIKELY	13	12	13	18	9	11	9	9	18	11	7	9	16
NOT MADE DIFFERENCE	56	60	53	52	60	54	70	62	51	50	74	70	45
KNOW NO DEER HUNTER(V)	6	3	9	8	4	7	1	8	7	7	--	*	11
DON'T KNOW	3	2	4	3	5	2	--	2	3	7	1	1	5
REFUSED	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				HUNTING		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	SLF	FAM	NOT
DEMOCRAT	31%	26%	37%	100%	--%	--%	39%	29%	30%	32%	19%	24%	38%
REPUBLICAN	31	34	28	--	--	100	22	36	29	35	33	32	30
INDEPENDENT	20	24	15	--	100	--	16	16	24	20	29	26	15
OTHER	10	8	11	--	--	--	12	13	9	5	9	10	10
NONE	6	5	6	--	--	--	10	4	5	6	8	7	5
DON'T KNOW	1	1	2	--	--	--	1	2	1	1	*	2	1
REFUSED	2	2	2	--	--	--	--	*	3	2	1	1	3

QD11: In what year were you born? (ENTER FOUR-DIGIT YEAR)

	TOT	GENDER		PARTISANSHIP			AGE IN YEARS				HUNTING		
		M	F	DEM	IND	REP	<30	<45	<60	60+	SLF	FAM	NOT
18-29	14%	13%	15%	18%	12%	10%	100%	--%	--%	--%	13%	15%	13%
30-44	26	29	22	24	21	30	--	100	--	--	32	29	23
45-59	35	31	39	33	43	32	--	--	100	--	37	40	30
60 and over	24	26	23	24	24	27	--	--	--	100	17	15	32
DK/REFUSED	1	1	1	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	1	2

\* denotes less than .5%

-- denotes 0%

## HOW THE POLL WAS DONE

This BADGER POLL™ was conducted by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center as part of its ongoing program of research designed to benefit the research community and the people of Wisconsin, under the direction of G. Donald Ferree, Jr., Associate Director for Public Opinion Research of the Center. This Badger Poll™ was funded with private funds made available through the UW-Madison Chancellor's Office and University Communications. The media sponsor of the survey was the Capital Times newspaper of Madison. The BADGER POLL™ is intended to be a "poll of record" for the state, investigating matters of concern to Wisconsinites including politics, culture, and their daily lives, adhering to the highest standards of polling methodology and rigorous independence.

A total of 524 randomly selected adult residents of Wisconsin were interviewed over the telephone from June 8-17, inclusive. Telephone numbers were generated by computer in proportion to the number of adults living in each area of the state. Theoretically, results from this survey have a "margin of error" of a little over +/- 4%. This means that, had we asked every eligible adult in Wisconsin, exactly these questions at the time the survey was conducted, there is only a one in twenty chance that the answers would differ by more than that in either direction from what we report here. There could be differences because of changes in question wording, events occurring in the meantime, or any of the practical difficulties involved in taking a scientific survey. Results based on subgroups are subject to a larger "margin of error".