

Research Project to Assess the Health of Wild Turkeys in Ontario

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Study rationale:

Information on the current health status of wild turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*) in Ontario is scarce; therefore, we will collect and test samples from wild turkeys that have been hunter-harvested, struck by vehicles, died of natural causes, etc. to assess for infectious diseases.

Our goal is to help ensure continued conservation of a sustainable wild turkey population in Ontario by establishing baseline disease surveillance data that can be used to compare with future monitoring data and to develop targeted surveillance and management strategies.

Benefits and information sharing:

The direct participation of hunters in disease surveillance will be critical to the project's success. Study results will be made available via presentations, publications, newsletters, and web postings. Study information will be available to those involved in the sustainable management of wild turkeys in Ontario.

How you can help:

Contact us ahead of the hunt (spring/fall of 2015/2016), and we will send you a short data collection sheet and instructions. Contact information is strictly in case further information on the individual turkey is needed; it will be kept confidential and will not be included in any data or results. After you have completed the mandatory MNRF wild turkey harvest report and processed the turkey (removing the meat, spurs, wings, beard, etc.) and if you are willing, please submit the following for testing:

a) **Whole carcass** (including internal organs). This is strongly preferred as it enables a complete health assessment of the bird.

-OR-

b) **Complete set of body parts:** Head and neck, and a leg in one bag. All internal organs (including spleen, liver, lungs, heart, kidneys, intestines) in a second, separate bag.

Please complete the sample submission form and place it in a sealed bag (zip lock preferably), then place within the bag with the carcass or head/neck/leg so it is submitted with the carcass. Then, either 1) drop off at a designated center (list will be provided), or 2) place in the freezer and contact us. Depending on your location, we will arrange to pick it up directly or we will ship you a cooler with a self-addressed, pre-paid return label.

Contact information - Please feel free to contact us ahead of time with any questions or concerns.

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Your assistance is greatly appreciated!