



Department of Pathobiology

**LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH**

(REB#16AU026)

**Title: Developing and piloting a web-based reporting system to enhance wildlife disease surveillance in Ontario**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Drs. Claire Jardine and Jane Parmley of the University of Guelph and the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (CWHC) and Dr. Colin Robertson of Wilfred Laurier University and CWHC. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Dr. Claire Jardine at 519-824-4120 ext. 54656 ([cjardi@uoguelph.ca](mailto:cjardi@uoguelph.ca)).

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

1. To develop and pilot a web-based reporting tool that aims to enhance wildlife disease surveillance in Ontario
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the web-based reporting tool.

Information gathered during this study is intended for use in publication. Information may also be applied to wildlife health management and future research directions.

**BACKGROUND**

The Ontario/Nunavut region of the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (CWHC) conducts wildlife health surveillance in Ontario and Nunavut as part of Canada's national wildlife health program. The goal of the CWHC is to apply the best knowledge and science available to monitor and understand the health of wild animals and keep decision-makers and the public informed and aware of wildlife health issues. To do this the CWHC relies on specimens (mainly carcasses of dead wild animals) being submitted. Detecting sick and dead wild animals is difficult and the CWHC relies on a network of wildlife health experts and enthusiasts to find and report sick and dead wildlife and to provide critical contextual information (e.g., population size or distribution) to better interpret disease findings and health status. There is growing recognition that electronic-based reporting systems may provide a cost effective way to improve our ability to detect disease in wildlife.

This project is funded by This project was funded (or partially funded) by the OMAFRA-University of Guelph Strategic Partnership, under the Disease Surveillance

Plan, which is a joint federal-provincial Growing Forward 2 project with in-kind support from the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative.

## **PROCEDURES**

In order to participate in the study, you must complete the online application to join available at [www.wildlifehealthtracker.com](http://www.wildlifehealthtracker.com). Once your application is complete, we are asking you to report sick and dead wildlife that you encounter in Ontario between September 2016 and September 2017 using the web-based tool: [www.wildlifehealthtracker.com](http://www.wildlifehealthtracker.com). In order to make a report, you simply need to login into wildlifehealthtracker.com and report what you have observed. Each report is expected to take 5-10 minutes to complete. Participants may be contacted following submission of a report to determine if they are willing and able to submit carcasses for diagnostic testing.

At the end of the study period, each participant will be asked to complete an online evaluation survey to assess the effectiveness of the reporting tool; the anticipated time to complete the survey is between 10 and 20 minutes.

## **POTENTIAL RISKS**

There is no expected risk to you as a result of your participation. Once participants have submitted their application to join, they are not required to report any sightings of sick or dead animals. Only members of the research team will have access to the information provided on the application and to the evaluation survey responses provided. Any photographs submitted by participants may be viewed by visitors to the website, so we caution you to avoid including any people in the photographs you submit.

## **POTENTIAL BENEFITS**

Participating in this research will offer you no direct personal benefits; however, this research has the potential to benefit the wildlife health discipline by strengthening wildlife health surveillance in Ontario. This information can then be used to improve knowledge of the health of Ontario wildlife.

## **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION**

None.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Protecting your information is an important part of this study. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study to the extent allowed by law. Your data will be held in a secure location and only members of the research team will ever have access to the application information and submitted evaluation surveys. Please note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed while data are in transit over the internet.

Your name will not appear in any report. Any findings released from the outcome of this study will only be released in a way in which they cannot be directly linked back to any of the participants.

### **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. You can choose not to answer any evaluation survey questions that you would prefer not to. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and submitting the online application to join. You can withdraw from this study at any time by contacting Dr. Claire Jardine.

Your personal information will be removed and the wildlife reports that you have previously submitted will be removed from the study. Participants need not offer any reason for withdrawing consent.

The information collected from you will only be used for the purposes of this study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

### **RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS**

You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (REB#), please contact Director, Research Ethics; University of Guelph; reb@uoguelph.ca; (519) 824-4120 (ext. 56606).

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

You may indicate at the end of the evaluation survey whether you would like to receive a written copy of the final research report. If you select 'no' and change your mind, please email or phone Dr. Claire Jardine and we will send you a copy.

Please print and keep a copy of this Letter of Information so that you can refer back to it should you have the need.

Sincerely,

Claire Jardine, Associate Professor,  
Department of Pathobiology,  
University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1  
Phone:519-824-4120 ext 54656, Fax: 519-824-5930