After deer with Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) were found this summer near San Antonio, researchers and public officials have been on alert to ensure the disease doesn't spread.

CWD is a degenerative neurological disease that effects deer, it has been likened to mad cow disease Deer who contract the disease often lose weight, stop eating, have trouble balancing, and start acting abnormally.Scientists have known about the disease since 1967, but in Texas, concern over the disease has escalated in the last few years

In 2012, two deer near the Hueco Mountains tested positive for CWD. These were the first documented cases of CWD in Texas.

This summer, four deer were found at a deer farm in Medina County to have the disease. Forty-three of the deer on that farm were euthanized to prevent the possible spread of CWD.

"In Medina County they found a two year-old white tailed deer in a breeding facility that had CWD it was part of their normal testing regimen and as a result the facility was put in quarantine. They tested all the deer that had been in contact with the deer from that breeding facility," explained Aaron Sisson, District Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife.

Sisson said that CWD is 100% fatal for deer and that Texas Parks and Wildlife has taken great interest in stopping the disease from spreading. Deer farmers have to test 20 percent of the deer which die on their farm for CWD and report those results to the state. Biologists like Sisson also perform tests on deer they find killed or dead.

But Dr. Steve Presley who is part of a team of deer researchers at Texas Tech said that it is hard to find dead deer in the wild to study, let alone dead deer whose brainstems are still in a condition to be tested for CWD.

"There's a concern about the disease getting into wild populations," Presley said. He said that it is possible for diseases like CWD to spread from captive deer populations into the wild.

One of the other complications for researchers like Presley in learning about CWD is that the disease can take a few years to show up.

"Theres really still a far way to go with fully understanding CWD," said Dr. Ernest Smith, another member of the deer researching team at Texas Tech. Together the research team studies nutrition, drug residue, physical health and diseases in deer to offer guidance to deer farmers around Texas. Texas Tech is looking into researching some of the environmental factors that would play into CWD.

"At this point we can't say if it's spreading in the wild herds-- we don't know," said Dr. Galen Austin who researches animal science for Texas Tech. Austin is interested in deer health as a researcher and as a hunter.

"You want to make sure the animals are around for you to enjoy as well. My grandson killed his first deer two years ago, my son hunts, I want the deer to be around for generations. I want to see the wild and captive herds stay healthy," Austin said.

The Texas Tech researchers say that CWD is one of many areas they are focused on right now, they explained that Texas Parks and Wildlife is more heavily involved in trying to curb the disease.

Aaron Sisson, district biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife, has received plenty of updates and direction on CWD this summer.

"CWD can actually persist in soil for years," Sisson said. "If another deer happens to go by and happens to pick up that protein, then they get infected, so that's why Parks and Wildlife is working so hard to make sure it doesn't spread, because there's no known cure, there's no known vaccine disease."

Sisson clarified that CWD is not known to impact human health. But, he said, the disease could impact people's pocketbooks if it causes deer populations to decline. In Texas, deer hunting is a multi-billion dollar industry.

"That's why it's really important to the state and they really don't want it to hurt rural economies and the hunting economy in the state of Texas, it's billions of dollars," he said.

Sisson helps with testing deer for CWD in the South Plains and said that out of the hundreds of deer tested here last year, none tested positive for CWD.

"You actually have to cut out the brainstem and send it to the lab to be tested," Sisson explained.

Though there is no evidence to show that CWD impacts people, Sisson said that hunters should still be sure to cook their venison properly, just to be safe.

"And if you see a deer that is emaciated, or is dizzy walking in circles, drooling, or acting really strange, report that to the local game warden," Sisson said.