User Guide:
WHISPers

User Guide to the Wildlife Health Information Sharing Partnership - event reporting system (WHISPers)

Why use WHISPers?

Situational awareness event map and table: Displays "who, what, where, when, and why" information about sick/dead wildlife disease events provided by natural resource management agencies.

Historical context and reports: Search 10,000+ current and historical records; download data in a spreadsheet or generate a pdf report with map.

Notifications: Automatically emails you anytime events with your self-selected interests are entered or updated in the previous 24 hours. Refer to *WHISPers User Guide: Notifications*.

Direct access to NWHC: Request diagnostic and technical help from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) from within a WHISPers event.

Collaborate: Allows data sharing and real-time messaging by registered users within and between agencies.

Data safely stored and easy to find: Resource management professionals decide who can access private information.

WHISPers Resources

- Website whispers.usgs.gov;
- Information page www.usgs.gov/nwhc/whispers;
- Help desk **whispers@usgs.gov.**

> If you have an urgent wildlife disease situation requiring immediate diagnostic assistance or field response consultation, please contact the USGS National Wildlife Health Center at NWHC-epi@usgs.gov or 608-270-2480 or Honolulu Field Station at 808-535-9112 or thierry_work@usgs.gov.

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Contents

Helpful Tips

Homepage: View map and table, search and download data

- **Circles on map represent "Events"** of one or more sick or dead animals clustered in space and time. One event may include multiple locations. (Events entered prior to 2019 focused on five or more sick or dead wildlife.)
- **County level location** information is displayed on this public map; circles are at county centroids.
- **Default search date range** is the last 4 weeks.
- **Search and download** publicly available data, generate pdf reports for one or multiple events. Refer to *WHISPers User Guide: Viewing, Searching, and Saving WHISPers Data* for more details.
- **Register** to access additional features (based on role assigned).

Create an event: Document event and request diagnostic help

Data entry and edit is available to registered users assigned roles as a Partner User, Partner Manager, or Partner Administrator. Affiliates must be added as a collaborator on an event-by-event basis to view non-public information or to edit events. Refer to *WHISPers User Guide: Roles and Privileges* for more details.

Registered partner role users: log in and click "Create Event" in the top banner. Required fields are marked with a red asterisk. The *Field Manual of Wildlife Disease* has information on mortality investigation, documenting the event history, and more.

- **Refer to information tips** in hover over by each data field.

- **Required fields** can be made more obvious by selecting "Highlight Public Fields" under "Form Options".
- **Use best estimate** for data and information added.
- **Can add multiple locations** to an event.
- **Add comments** to capture any information about the event, e.g., clinical signs, site description, observations, land use, environmental factors, etc.
- **Can add multiple species** to a location, as well as known or suspected species diagnosis if you have the information; it is okay if you don't.
- **Skip event diagnosis** (overall cause of the event) if you don't have one yet.
- **Visibility** defaults to public for basic home page map and table information, e.g., date, county location, species, number affected, and event diagnosis.
- **Complete the request service step** to automatically contact the diagnostic and epidemiology staff at the USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI or Honolulu, HI based on event location. Reply sent within two business days.
- **Share** the non-public event details with trusted colleagues who are registered WHISPers users, even if they are in other organizations. Users in your WHISPers organization can automatically see the private information. Learn how to easily create and add a group of trusted colleagues in the *WHISPers User Guide: Creating Circles of Trust*.

Update an existing event: Keep a log of event details

Registered partner and collaborating affiliate users: log in and find your event on the home page (adjust search dates if needed) or on the "Your Events" tab in your dashboard.

- **Update data** regarding numbers affected, species affected, end dates, field observations, etc. (more details in section below). Return periodically to add updates as the event unfolds.
- **To document event happenings or send a real-time email to users,** click the "Comments" tab, type your information in the comment box, and select location, event, or collaborator alert as the category. Collaborator alerts are real-time emails to users you select.
- **Use the "Requests" tab** to send a real-time email requesting service from the USGS National Wildlife Health Center. You can also use this section to relay the shipment tracking number of a previously approved submission to NWHC.
- **Use the "Sharing" tab** to manage access of invited users to private event details.

When the event is over: Review and update data

If no further updates are expected, log in, find your event, review the information, and click the "Edit" button to update the data as needed before marking the event complete.

A few key fields to pay attention to are the ending date, species affected, numbers sick and dead, and species and event diagnoses.

Ending date: enter at each location based on your best estimate.

Species affected: add species to the lists by location.

Tallying sick and dead numbers:
- **Known and Estimated:** Include number known sick in estimated sick tally and known dead in estimated dead tally.
- **Leave fields blank and don't enter zeros** if you do not have sick/dead data.
- **Avoid re-counting animals**, especially if there are repeated visits to a location. Consider whether animals observed sick were later seen dead; if so, only count them as dead.
- **If you only have a total number without a species breakdown**, you can divide the number across the species.
- **Add comments to explain:** After clicking "Save", click the "Comments" tab and add explanations, context, or alert collaborators about updates. E.g., "20 dead Green and Blue-winged Teal reported, exact species pick up numbers not provided so listed as 10 each". or "Walked the shoreline again at 3pm on 19 Dec 2024, collected 5 fresh dead mallards and 3 decomposed canvasbacks. Updated the species table."

Diagnosis(es): For specimens submitted to NWHC, an NWHC epidemiologist will add diagnostic results to your WHISPers event. If you use other laboratories, note that reports sometimes contain very detailed diagnostic information; it is not necessary to enter every diagnostic finding for every specimen. For species diagnosis, focus on the main cause of illness and death for the species. For event diagnosis, select the overall main reason(s) for the mortality/morbidity event across all locations and species.
- **To add a species diagnosis (significant finding(s) in a species):**
  - Click on "Affected Animals" in the left side navigation pane, click "Add Species Diagnosis" button, and select a species diagnosis from the dropdown.

- o "Suspect" is automatically added to the species diagnosis listed unless you toggle it off and enter a diagnostic laboratory.
    - o Add the basis and significance of diagnosis.

- **To add an event diagnosis (main cause(s) of death across all locations and species):**
    - o Click on "Event Diagnosis" in the left side navigation pane. All the species diagnosis entered in an event are available in the event diagnosis(es) dropdown menu.
    - o Select a diagnosis from the dropdown, or undetermined if a cause was not determined.
    - o Repeat to add another diagnosis.

If no event diagnosis is selected, it will default to "Pending" for "Incomplete" events and "Undetermined" for "Complete" events.

Not sure what to enter? Selecting the event diagnosis(es) can be a bit subjective. Consider:

- What condition(s) affected most of the animals?
- What condition(s) do wildlife managers need to know about for situational awareness?
- Are any of the diagnoses emerging diseases or significant to human health or domestic animal health?
- How would you summarize this event to others?

Examples:
1. 4 snow geese diagnosed with avian cholera and 1 with wing trauma.
    Species Diagnoses = Avian Cholera, Trauma
    Event Diagnosis = Avian Cholera
2. A variety of minor diagnostic findings across several specimens without a clear reasonable explanation for the overall mortality.
    Species Diagnosis = Undetermined
    Event Diagnosis = Undetermined
3. History and clinical signs suggestive of avian botulism but no carcasses submitted for diagnostic evaluation.
    Species Diagnosis = Botulism suspect
    Event Diagnosis = Botulism suspect
4. Avian cholera and lead poisoning occur in significant numbers in the same event.
    Species Diagnosis = Avian Cholera, Toxicosis (Lead)
    Event Diagnoses = Avian Cholera, Toxicosis (Lead)

Final step: Change event to "Complete"

This informs anyone viewing the event that it is over, and no additional updates are expected. You can toggle back to incomplete to add more information later if needed.

- After reviewing and updating event information, click on "General" in the left side navigation box and change the WHISPers Record Status to "Complete".
- You can use the "Report" button to generate a pdf report of your event.

Thank you for contributing to the Wildlife Information Sharing Partnership - event reporting system!