

CARE OF GAME

Goal: To promote hunter responsibility for hunting laws, activities, wildlife and resources.

Lesson 1: Field Dressing Game Animals

Objective

In this lesson you will:

- Describe how to field dress different kinds of game animals.

Enjoying a wild game dinner is a great benefit of hunting. To prevent the meat from spoiling, it's important to learn how to properly field dress the game animals you harvest. You should field dress game as soon as possible after making a quick, clean kill. When you get home, you'll need to clean, process and preserve the meat.

Laws and Regulations

Hunting laws and regulations for game handling in the field may differ from one state or province to the next. Before a hunt begins, you should read the hunting regulations guidebook for the state or province you plan to hunt so you know how to field dress and transport the carcass home legally.

Safe Game Handling

There is risk you could get an infectious disease through cuts and scrapes on your skin

from handling game animals. For example, rabbits may have *tularemia*; foxes, raccoons and rabbits may have *rabies*, wild hogs carry *Brucellosis*. To help prevent transfer of diseases when handling game, you should wear latex or rubber gloves.

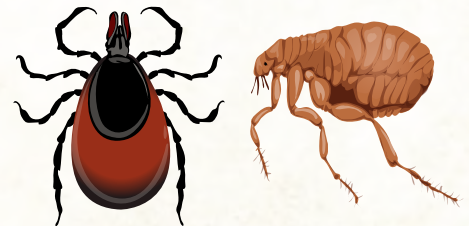


Protect yourself from disease when field dressing game by wearing latex or rubber gloves.

Also, wild animals typically have parasites such as ticks and fleas living in their fur or feathers. These insects can transfer diseases to people through bites.

For example, deer may have ticks that can cause Lyme disease.

Wild game meat has the same risks with harmful bacteria as other perishable meats, such as beef, pork, lamb and chicken.



Wild animals often host ticks and fleas, which can transfer diseases to people through their bites.

Field dress game as soon as possible to preserve the meat and prevent spoilage.



For instance, *Salmonella* and *Escherichia coli* (E-coli) live in the intestinal tracts of domestic and wild game. If you don't follow proper field dressing procedures, these bacteria can spoil the meat, and make you sick if you eat it.

What Causes Meat Spoilage?

The three causes of meat spoilage are:

- **Dirt:** prevent feathers, fur, feces, dirt and grime from touching the meat.
- **Heat:** cool down the carcass as soon as possible.
- **Moisture:** keep the meat dry.

What Are the Common Mistakes Hunters Make with Game Meat?

Usually, meat spoils because the hunter:

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- **Wounded the animal and retrieved it sometime later**
 - **Solution:** make a quick, clean kill and avoid shots to the abdominal cavity.
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- **Improperly field dressed the animal**
 - **Solution:** avoid cutting into the intestines and spilling contents on the meat.
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- **Handled the meat with dirty hands**
 - **Solution:** wash hands to remove dirt and grime and the animal's fur or feathers when handling the meat.
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- **Delayed processing the meat**
 - **Solution:** process the meat as soon as possible, especially in warm weather.
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- **Improperly processed the meat**
 - **Solution:** use clean tools and containers, including knives, benches, cutting boards, saws or grinders and packaging materials.
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If the hunter keeps the wild game meat clean, cool and dry, it can become the main course for a tasty meal.

Essential Field Dressing Tools



A hunter should pack the following tools for field dressing game.

- Sharp knife
- Whetstone or steel for sharpening
- Strong rope or cord
- Disposable latex or rubber gloves
- Clean cloth or paper towels
- Bottle or canteen of clean water
- Resealable plastic storage bags

Also, in the vehicle the hunter should have a cooler full of ice or snow for safe game storage until arriving home.

Field Dressing Small Game

If the hunt is short, an hour or so, and if the animal is NOT gut shot, you can store it temporarily in a game pouch or vest until returning home to process the game meat for the table.

Preserving and storing high quality game meat requires:

- *Field dressing the game animal properly and immediately after it expires.*
- *Keeping the carcass clean, cool and dry.*

However, if the hunt is longer and especially if the animal is gut shot, the hunter should dress, clean and cool the carcass as soon as possible.

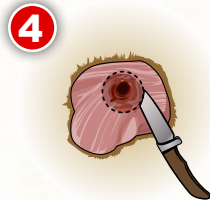
Once the animal (a rabbit or squirrel for example) dies, do the following.

- Lay the animal backside down on a stump, log or rock.
- Make a cut through the belly fur, skin and muscle from the rear legs to the ribs.
- Remove the intestines, heart, lungs and other organs and dispose of them properly by following the landowner's rules or accepted practice, which could include leaving them for varmints, burying them or carrying them out.

- Cut out bloodshot areas.
- Wash the cavity of the carcass with clean water, making sure to remove hair, blood and feces.

- Dry the cavity with a clean cloth or paper towel.

- Put the carcass in a re-sealable plastic bag and store in pouch for processing later.



Field Dressing Upland Game Birds, Wild Turkeys and Waterfowl



When hunters take a game bird, they usually place the carcass in a game pouch or vest until the hunt ends. However, if the weather is warm or the bird is shot in the mid-section, hitting intestines and other organs, then hunters should field dress the game as soon as possible.

After the bird dies, complete the following steps for field dressing.

- Lay the game bird on its back.



- Trace the breast bone from the neck to where it ends between the legs.



- Find the soft skin between the breastbone and tail.
- Pull up this skin and make a horizontal cut from leg to leg through the skin and tissue.



- Reach into the stomach cavity and pull out the intestines and organs.



- Cut around the vent (anus) and remove from the carcass.



- Find the soft skin between the neck and the breastbone.
- Pull up this skin and make a short horizontal cut through the skin and tissue.



- Reach in to pull out the crop and remaining intestines, taking care to prevent any juices in the crop or intestines from spilling into the cavity or onto meat.



- Rinse with clean water, wipe dry with a clean cloth or paper towel, and prop it open with a stick to ventilate the cavity.



At the vehicle, place a small bag of ice in the cavities of larger game birds, such as wild turkeys, pheasants and geese, to chill down the carcass. For the same reason, don't stack them close to or on top of one another.



Immediately after field dressing upland game birds, cool them down with ice.

Field Dressing Big Game

Proper field dressing is essential for hunters to preserve the meat and to prevent spoilage.

Big game animals vary in size from the small and lightweight antelope or deer to large, heavy game such as bear, elk and moose. The field dressing techniques for big game animals depend on the size and sex of the game and related hunting laws and regulations. For example, hunting laws may require a deer carcass to remain whole or intact until ready for processing, but allow an elk or moose to be cut in half or quarters, making it easier and safer to remove from the field.

Opinions vary on how best to field dress big game. However, a beginner should have direct instruction from someone with experience in field dressing big game before attempting to do it alone.

It is important when field dressing big game to begin cooling down the carcass as soon as possible by opening the abdominal cavity and removing the intestines.

The following steps for field dressing big game are basic, but satisfactory for many instances.

- Make certain the animal is dead before getting close to it.
- Approach the animal from the animal's back and use a stick to touch the eye to make sure it's dead.
- Prop the animal on its back, using a rope, trees, rocks and/or sticks for assistance.



- Make a cut through the fur, skin and stomach muscles from the breastbone to the tail, taking care not to cut into the intestines or sex organs.



- Before removing the animal's sex organs and anus, consult your state or province's laws and regulations. Cut out the anus and sex organs, taking care not to spill urine or feces into the open cavity.



- Reach in with the knife at the lower end of the chest and cut away the diaphragm from the chest.



- Reach up into the chest cavity near the throat, find the windpipe and esophagus and

cut through both.



- Roll the animal onto its side and pull all of the organs and intestines out of the cavity and away from the carcass.



- Turn the carcass over to drain out any accumulated blood.
- Roll the animal onto its back, remove any fur and blood, rinse the cavity with clean water (avoid using stream water) and wipe dry with a clean cloth or paper towel.



Dispose of entrails properly. For example, a private landowner may prefer that hunters bury entrails of big game at the kill site or want them left in the open as food for other wild game. Consult the regulations for the state or province where the hunt takes place because there may be special rules for disposing of entrails.



After field dressing a game animal, make sure you properly dispose of the entrails. If hunting public land, check the regulations about how to dispose of the entrails. If you're on private land, consult with the landowner.

Safe and skillful use of the knife when field dressing big game is important. The hunter must be especially careful when cutting out the diaphragm, windpipe and esophagus because his/her hands are hidden from view.

If the day is warm, the hunter should pack the cavity of a big game animal with several bags of ice to chill it before transporting home for refrigeration and processing.

Lesson 2: Preserving and Storing Game Meat

Objective

In this lesson you will:

- Explain basic procedures for preserving and storing game meat.

Fresh Cuts at Camp

One of the best times for hunters is dinnertime at camp when fresh game meat is the main course. At a deer hunting camp, for example, most of the hunters spend from dawn to dusk on stand or scouting for deer. Some



Dinner at the hunting camp is a special celebration among friends and family.

harvest game; some don't. They usually return tired, cold, wet and hungry. At the end of the day, there's nothing better than to sit down to a meal of fresh cut venison tenderloins flash-fried in butter served with sautéed onions, baked potatoes, green beans, fresh-baked bread and homemade apple pie.

Dining on Wild Game at Home

A wild game dinner at home with family and friends long after the hunting season ends can be delicious. Properly butchering, preserving and storing the meat is essential for tasty meals.

This process includes no artificial preservatives, sweeteners or colorings.

Preserving and storing game

Treat friends and family to healthy and nutritious wild game meat throughout the year.



meat may be completely natural, containing only salt and pepper. Or it may include specially combined spice mixes, such as Cajun, Italian and Southwest flavors.

Butchering

If a hunter wishes to have a game animal mounted, he/she should consult with a taxidermist or experienced wild game butcher for proper processing before butchering begins.

The basic tools for butchering are the same as for field dressing with the addition of a meat grinder for sausage making and a meat saw for halving and quartering big game.

The basic butchering process for small game, upland game birds, turkeys and waterfowl may begin as soon as you get home. This process involves removing the head, feet, tail and skin or feathers. If you wish to keep the skin on birds, then you have to pluck the feathers by hand. Next, the game animal may be kept whole, cut into halves or quarters, cut at bone joints into separate pieces, or the meat filleted from the bones.

Basic butchering for big game requires a couple of day's time for the carcass to cool down. The carcass should be stored in a



If you're planning to have a game animal mounted, talk to a taxidermist before the hunt about how to prepare your trophy.

cool, dry place (best where the temperature is constant and below 50 degrees) until it is completely chilled. Many people hang the animal upside

down with its rear legs in a gambrel hook and remove the skin, feet and head. Then, the butcher fillets each of the muscles individually, removes all tendons and fat from the muscles, and then carves these larger pieces into roasts, steaks or chopped meat for sausage making.

Throughout the butchering processes for all game meat, the carcass must be kept clean, by rinsing with fresh water and dry by wiping with clean clothes or paper towels. Clean the butcher table regularly. Clean and sharpen knives frequently. Take special care to remove even the smallest pieces of feathers, fur,



While butchering game meat, use clean tools and containers, including knives, benches, cutting boards, saws or grinders and packaging materials.

dirt or grime from the meat.

Packaging game meat depends on the size of the family served at a single meal.



Preserving

The common ways for preserving game meat for later consumption include:

- Freezing
- Jerking or drying
- Smoking
- Pickled

Each of these techniques creates unique flavors, which can be enhanced with spices and brines. Also, for some processes, such as jerking and smoking, the meat may have to be cut into thin slices or, if ground meat, spread thin.

Storing

How long game meat will keep without loss of flavor depends on the care given during field dressing, butchering and preserving, and the particular type of processing (for example, freezing or jerking). Game meat may keep in a freezer for up to a year.



Jerky is a great way to preserve the delicious flavor of wild game meat.

Lesson 3: Wild Game Recipes

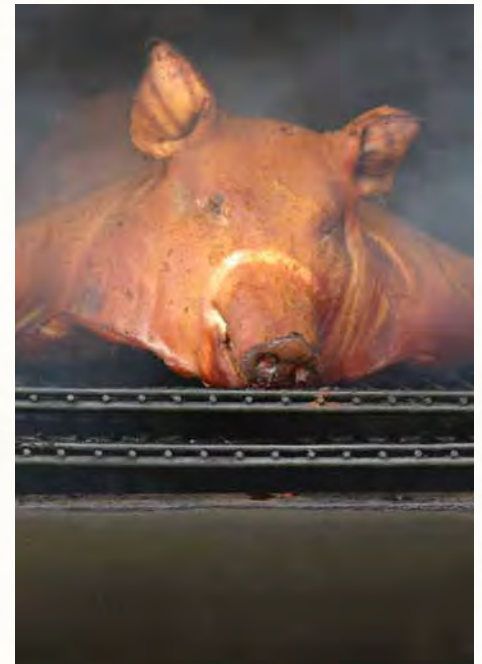
Objective

In this lesson you will:

- Identify sources of wild game recipes.

Eating natural, organic foods has always been a healthy choice. Hunters have been harvesting game meat for their families and friends long before eating "all natural foods" became a popular advertising slogan. Wild game is a great source of high quality, flavorful and natural meat because these animals don't consume artificial additives, and they roam free of fences and other barriers.

There are many recipes available in books, magazines and online. Visit [www. OutdoorRoadmap.com](http://www.OutdoorRoadmap.com) to find recipes that are tasty and easy to make.



Wild game is an excellent source of nutritious and flavorful meat.