

## Safe Handling of Wild Game This Hunting Season

It is that time of year, hunting season! For many, it is considered the best time of year. The majority of individuals who hunt do so to provide food for their families. Many prefer the taste of venison over other choices of meat. Venison is high in many vitamins and minerals our bodies need, such as thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, iron, and calcium. Venison is traditionally lower in cholesterol than many other meats, thus making it a more desirable product.

To have a quality, safe meal this hunting season, there are several things you must do to ensure your kill is safe to consume. Follow these tips from field to plate this hunting season.

- Never handle or consume wild animals that appear sick or that were acting abnormally.
- Practice good personal hygiene in the field by packing disposable gloves and sanitizer wipes.
- Have clean knives/tools to use while field dressing.
- Carry a tarp or something to place between the carcass/tools and the ground to help prevent contamination.
- Pay attention to the weather. Field dress as soon as possible to help reduce body heat. When temperatures are above 40°F, pathogens have the opportunity to grow more rapidly, potentially causing a health risk.
- Never wrap the carcass in plastic or a tarp to “keep clean” during transport. This does not allow the carcass to start cooling properly; it only traps the heat, keeping the meat at temperatures in the danger zone (40°F-140°F). Packing ice in the carcass will help keep meat cool during transport.
- Be sure the internal temperature is cold prior to placing cuts of meat in insulated coolers. Always use ice or blocks of ice to keep cool during transport.
- Do not hold/store carcasses outdoors in warm temperatures. Process the carcass as soon as possible.
- Do not handle or eat brain, spinal cord, spleen, or lymph nodes of game.
- Use a meat thermometer to cook meat to proper internal temperatures (minimum 160°F for all types of meat from ground or fresh venison; 165°F for the breast of game birds, waterfowl, and whole birds), as this will help ensure harmful bacteria are killed and meat is not overcooked. The color of meat is an unreliable indicator of proper cooking.

The next time you go hunting, plan ahead for your safety and the safety of the meat you are harvesting. Hunting takes time, hard work, dedication, and patience to be successful. The last thing you want to do is to mishandle the carcass/meat, which could possibly lead to foodborne illness.

For more information on food safety while hunting, contact your local Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office : Jerry Coplen, CEA-Ag/Nr, 940-459-2651

Source: [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/e432ba38-79f6-42c8-af50-df7cf788a298/Game\\_from\\_Farm\\_to\\_Table.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/e432ba38-79f6-42c8-af50-df7cf788a298/Game_from_Farm_to_Table.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

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