

SAFE GAME MEAT HANDLING

Many parasites and diseases occur naturally in wildlife. Some can affect the health of people handling or preparing game meat. Harvested wild animals should be a healthy food source. This fact sheet provides basic precautions to ensure that hunters, their families, other animals, and the environment stay healthy.

GOALS:

- ◆ Keep your meat safe to eat.
- ◆ Protect your family, your pets, and your own health.
- ◆ Recognize potential signs of disease in your harvested animal.

Game meat quality is affected by **temperature** and **cleanliness**.

BEST PRACTICES FOR KEEPING MEAT SAFE TO EAT:

It's important to **cool the carcass rapidly after death**.

- ◆ Remove internal organs and do not puncture stomach(s) and intestines.
- ◆ Skin the carcass as much as possible. Keep the abdomen open and the carcass off the ground to maximize air flow. Or quarter and hang from a tree.
- ◆ Avoid leaving carcasses intact overnight. If unavoidable, ensure at a minimum the organs are removed.
- ◆ For larger animals, cooling is assisted by quartering and deboning.
- ◆ Be aware at all times that carnivores will be attracted to the carcass and your meat.

It's important to **keep your meat clean**.

- ◆ When skinning, keep feces, hair, and dirt off the meat and use meat bags.
- ◆ If the meat gets dirty, clean it as best you can.
- ◆ Clean your hands, knives, and tools often. If you don't have water, hand wipes and paper towels will help.
- ◆ If your meat smells sour or is green, it may not be safe to eat. Poor cooling and hygiene allows bacteria to grow and spoil the meat.
- ◆ When you get home, clean your tools with hot soapy water.

IS THE ANIMAL HEALTHY?

- Did you watch the animal, was it acting normally?
- Is the animal in good body condition?
- If you see something unusual take a picture or a sample. It may be a common finding and not affect the meat.

TIP: bring a camera and ziplock bags to take photographs, notes, and samples. Pictures will help wildlife staff identify abnormalities and give you the right information.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- Always use a sharp knife or blade. Dull blades are more likely to cause injury. Carry a sharpening stone or extra blades.
- Protect your skin and eyes by using disposable gloves and glasses.
- Travel with a first aid kit and your regular medications.

CONSIDER CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE:

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a contagious disease that affects cervids (deer, elk, moose). The disease can be spread by moving infected cervid carcasses and tissues.

If you hunt...

Outside of B.C., do not return to B.C. with an intact cervid carcass. Submit the head for CWD testing in that area. Leave the **high-risk tissues** at the kill site and only bring back the processed meat and cleaned skull/hide.

In B.C., submit the cervid head to a local Wildlife or Conservation Officer Service office or CWD freezer drop-off station.

Learn about the risks of CWD and how you can help:
www.gov.bc.ca/chronicwastingdisease

