

Deer must be dressed and processed using the following methods to ensure the meat is safe for consumption.

FIELD DRESSING

- Once the deer has died, field dress the deer as quickly as possible
- Wear disposable gloves to reduce the risk of exposure to disease
- Avoid cutting the stomach or intestines to reduce contamination of meat
- Avoid spilling intestine contents, feces or urine onto edible portions of carcass
- Minimize handling of brain and spinal tissues and fluids
- If cavity is rinsed out, be sure to dry the meat with a paper towel; damp meat spoils faster than dry meat
- Rapidly chill the carcass
 - Insert ice packs
 - Insert clean plastic bags filled with snow
 - Prop the rib cage open with a stick to help circulate air and cool carcass quickly
- Maintain carcass at 40 degrees or below to prevent bacterial growth
- Keep out of direct sunlight; do not tie to top of car because this exposes the carcass to contamination and sun
- Process the deer or take it to a commercial processing plant as soon as possible (within 10 hours)
- Do not process any meat if organs smell bad, have greenish discharge, have blood clots, tumors, or are discolored
- Also, examine the deer for parasites, ticks and lesions

HOME PROCESSING

- Maintain the carcass at 40 degrees or below until processing
- Remove the hide
- Wash hands, knives, and cutting boards often and sanitize with a solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach per 1 gallon of water
- Wear disposable gloves
- Store all raw meat separate from other foods in a refrigerator to avoid cross-contamination
- Refrigerated meat should be used within 2 or 3 days
- To avoid freezer burn, use freezer wrap or freezer storage bags; do not overload the freezer
- Properly frozen meat will store 9-12 months
- The flavor of game meats is mainly due to the fat they contain. To reduce the gamey flavor, trim the fat from the meat
- Cook game to at least 160 degrees



For proper canning and smoking procedures and methods for making jerky, contact:

Penn State Cooperative Extension
850 East Gore Road
Erie, PA 16509
814-825-0900

COMMERCIAL PROCESSORS

- Before hunting season begins, research processors in your area
- Ask to tour the facility to ensure your carcass will be handled, processed, and stored properly
- Make sure the facility has adequate refrigeration for the number of deer carcasses they will accept
- If the facility is a licensed food establishment, there must be a complete separation of game meat from domestic meat, poultry, and meat products
- Any equipment used to process game must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before it can be used for processing domestic meat, poultry, and meat products
- Skinned deer must be stored separately from unskinned carcasses
- The processor should have good recordkeeping practices to track each deer brought in for processing
- Processing tables should be made of a material that is easy to clean and sanitize between deer
- Tools, utensils, cutting boards, etc. should be clean and in good working condition
- Facility needs a safe source of water for cleaning equipment and hand washing
- Verify that the facility has adequate refrigeration space to store meat once it has been processed
- If the facility is smoking the meat or making jerky, verify that they are aware of safe procedures.

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

- Disposable gloves
- Sharp knife
- Strong rope for dragging
- Cooler full of ice or clean snow
- Clean plastic bags to fill with ice or snow to cool carcass
- Clean plastic bags to carry liver and heart
- Paper towels to wipe out cavity

CAUTION: TICKS

Ticks may crawl off the carcass and attach to humans and pets.

Ticks can transmit diseases such as Lyme Disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

If you find a tick attached to you or your pet, bring the tick to the Erie County Department of Health for identification.



Tick Removal:

- Using pointed tweezers, grasp the tick by its mouthparts where it enters the skin
- DO NOT grasp the body of the tick
- Pull steadily outward. Pull firmly until the tick breaks free
- Apply disinfectant to the bite wound

GAME COMMISSION

The Pennsylvania Game Commission offers two free brochures on venison:

To Field Dress a Deer — Offers step-by-step instructions with illustrations on how to field-dress a deer

Venison Needn't Be Pot Luck — Offers field-dressing instructions and cooking tips.

To obtain a copy, contact the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 814-432-3187.

ERIE COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

The extension offers a free brochure:

Proper Care and Handling of Venison From Field to Table

To obtain a copy, contact the extension at 814-825-0900 or visit their website at <http://foodsafety.cas.psu.edu/game.htm>.

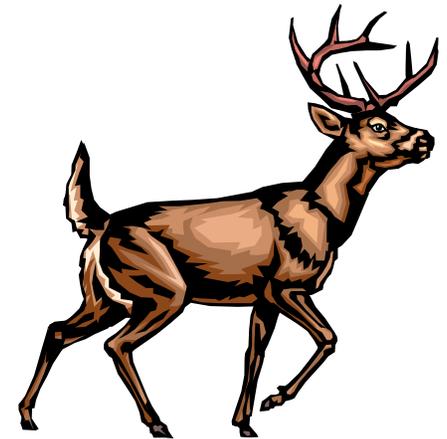
HUNTERS SHARING THE HARVEST

This is a venison donation program that channels donated venison to local food banks and soup kitchens.

This program is run in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Details can be found at <http://sharedeer.org> or <http://www.pgc.state.pa.us>.

A GUIDE TO SAFE DEER PROCESSING



ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Fax: 814/451-6775

www.ecdh.org