

From Ronda's Front Porch to Yours

Ronda White

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.

If you are an avid hunter, novice hunter or simply want to learn more on how to cook wild game, you may want to attend the Hunt For Dinner Tonight Cooking School. This will be held November 30 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at the 37th Street Church of Christ. This is hosted by The Texas A&M AgriLife Scurry County Extension along with Borden, Mitchell, Lynn, Gaines and Crosby Counties.

Registration is open November 1-15. No registrations will be taken at the door. Cost is \$20 per individual. The cooking school will feature cooking demonstrations of Venison Stew, Elk Sliders, and Baked Quail. Participants will get to sample featured recipes, receive a Dinner Tonight Cookbook and be eligible for fantastic door prizes. To register for the program stop by the Scurry County Extension Office located at 2605 Ave M, inside the Senior Citizen Center.

For more information on food safety while hunting or the Hunt for Dinner Tonight Cooking School, contact the Scurry County Extension Office at 573-5423.

Source: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/e432ba38-79f6-42c8-af50-df7cf788a298/Game_from_Farm_to_Table.pdf?MOD=AJPERES; Rebecca Dittmar, M.Ed, RS, Program Specialist, Food Protection Management Program, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, College Station, Texas.

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