

Wild Game Meat Processing

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Starting at the Beginning

When it comes to wild game meat processing, I believe that it is necessary to slit the animal's throat, in the belief that this will "bleed out" the animal. Some hunters believe that when an animal is killed, the heart ceases operation and when the heart stops beating, the blood stops flowing through the veins. Their thinking is that cutting a dead animal's throat may result in some minor amount of bleeding where the amount is minimal and provides little, if any, benefit.

While many hunters know that it is important to gut an animal as soon as possible as a best practice for wild game meat processing, I hunt 45 – 60 minutes from my home and I will gut the animal in the field and bring it home to skin. In order to keep the meat clean it is perfectly acceptable to leave the hide on until you get the animal out of the field and into a cleaner environment, but once it is out the hide needs to come off quickly.

There is no need to worry about removing any scent glands from the animal as part of wild game meat processing. Cutting out the glands in the legs of deer is another old time rule that has no benefit associated with it. The glands, if present, will be cleanly removed with the hide. While skinning you should be careful that the hair side of the hide doesn't come into contact with the meat. In addition, every effort should be made to keep any loose hairs from becoming dislodged and attaching themselves to the meat. But, no matter how careful you are, some hairs are bound to get on the carcass. If you do, you might try wiping them off with a wet cloth

There are two reasons for promptly skinning an animal. First, when the skin is removed it speeds up the cooling process of the meat. A warm carcass is an excellent breeding ground for all types of bacteria and for that reason you should get the meat cooled down as quickly as possible. And second, hides are frequently contaminated with dirt, dust, urine and feces.

As long as there aren't a lot of flies to contend with, I like to hang my meat for several hours in the shade prior to covering it with a game bag. If flies are a problem in your area, you might try sprinkling the carcass with finely ground black pepper or even spraying it down with an aerosol can of cooking oil. Both of these methods are said to be effective in discouraging flies from lighting on the meat.

Packaging and Storing Wild Game Meat

Aging meat is also a topic of considerable controversy. Some people feel that because wild game is in such good physical condition, aging the meat doesn't produce any beneficial results. I don't