

Wild Game Safety & Handling

It is important to take precautions in handling your game meat. Teton County Environmental Health professionals say proper handling will result in "safe food" for your family.

Bleeding and evisceration of the game animal should occur as quickly as possible. The body temperature of the animal may be 100°F or higher, if the animal has been stressed. The goal is to get the animal dressed, skinned, trimmed, washed and cooled down to 41°F (or less) as soon as possible to ensure safe food for your family. Environmental Health Technician, Sara Budge, comments, "Large game animals, such as elk and moose, can be challenging to cool down quickly due to their thick body mass. It is important to have adequate air circulation around the carcass to aid in cooling." If the cool-down process takes too long, spoilage can occur.

If a person processes their own meat, then clean hands and equipment are the first step. "It is critical to trim away any questionable areas of blood, bone, or bullet fragments, and contamination," says Budge. Packaged meat should be placed in the freezer as soon as possible.

When a hunter considers these factors in handling the game animal, his/her family are sure to enjoy the meal. To learn more about safe food handling and local education available, contact Mary Martin at the County Extension office, 307-733-3087, or Sara at Teton County Environmental Health, 307-732-8490.

Meat Processor

If a person does not process their own game meat, a reliable licensed meat processor should be selected. A licensed meat processing establishment will have the proper facility to be able to handle game meat in a sanitary manner. "Beware of friends or associates that say they will process your meat cheaper," states Budge. They may not have a proper facility to control the growth of bacteria, which can cause illness.

[10 Tips for Processing Your First Elk](#)

[Beginners Guide to Processing your Own Wild Game](#)

Handwashing

Proper meat processing facilities, which follow Wyoming Food Safety Rule requirements, are equipped with walk-in coolers, walk-in freezers, handwashing sinks and product washing sinks; all which aid in controlling bacterial growth. Budge states, "Bacteria, such as E. coli, must be controlled to prevent food borne illness." A person can ask a meat operator to see their food license, issued by the Wyoming Department of Agriculture.

Budge says, "Also, to ensure safe food when preparing and cooking game meat, avoid cross contamination with other foods by washing hands and surfaces that have come into contact with the raw meat." Budge continues, "Clean hands and equipment are important when preparing any meal."

Cooking Meat Thoroughly

The last step in ensuring safe meals is to thoroughly cook all wild game meat to an internal temperature of 165°F or higher. Food thermometers are available locally at hardware, grocery, and discount stores.

[Proper Care and Handling](#)