

WILD GAME PROCESSING



Schrupp's Meat & Seafood, LLC



— Dave & Pam Schrupp —

216 W. James St. • Paynesville

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We will be processing
ONLY wild game in
November!

Regular Business Hours:
Mon. - Fri.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
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Cut With Caution

Chronic wasting disease hasn't been found in Minnesota deer, but food safety officials urge hunters who field dress their animals to be newly aware of body parts that could be infected. Here's a step-by-step guide:

By Dennis Anderson

1 Once your animal is down, approach it with caution, as you would in any similar circumstance, making sure the animal is dead. Most hunters then unload their rifles or shotguns, or at least empty the chambers, before placing the firearms in a safe place.

2 Assess where the deer was shot. If it was brought down by a typical heart-lung shot, few organs or body parts where proteins called prions concentrate likely will have been hit. Scientists believe prions cause chronic wasting disease (CWD). A shot to the spine—one spot where prions gather—is a different case, as is a shot to the head, where prions in an infected animal concentrate in the brain and lymph nodes. Other spots known to harbor prions are the eyes, tonsils, and spleen.

3 Begin by pulling on a pair of shoulder-length rubber gloves, which can be purchased in many sporting-goods stores and in some veterinary supply shops. The style and size of knife preferred for field dressing is often one of personal preference. But Kevin Elfering, a former meat cutter who is director of the meat and poultry inspection program of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, suggests a smaller or medium-sized knife is preferable to a larger one. "For field dressing, I actually like a skinning knife, while for deboning an animal I prefer a standard boning knife with a 5-inch blade and plastic handle.

4 The big picture in Minnesota—so far—is that CWD hasn't been found in wild deer. But it's possible it will, perhaps sooner than later. So precautions are warranted. With that in mind, begin the field dressing as you typically would. Some hunters start by skinning around a buck's penis and urinary tract. (If a downed doe was still nursing, remove its udder.) Also make an incision around the anus. You may choose to use pieces of string to tie off the anus and penis to avoid tainting meat.

5 Problematic for most hunters concerned about CWD will be understanding the lymph nodes in a deer are widely dispersed and probably can't be wholly avoided in the field-dressing process. Also the spleen probably won't be easily identified from the rest of the viscera. Don't worry: You can still field dress and (if you wish) debone an animal while exercising all necessary cautions.

6 Open the intestinal cavity as you typically would. Again, make sure you are wearing protective gloves (A rubber band at the top of shoulder-length gloves helps hold the gloves in place.) Then reach up and, as usual, sever the windpipe so the viscera can be pulled out. The spleen will come with it, as will some lymph nodes. With the viscera excised and with the anus pulled forward to be removed with it, turn the animal over allowing it to drain. "Some hunters try to wipe the inside of the

carcass with leaves to clean it, Elfering said. "I would advise against that. Better to clean it with a hose as soon as possible and, as usual, to keep the carcass as cool as possible."

7 A plastic bag should be taken into the field for disposal of the rubber gloves, which should be carried out of the woods and placed in a garbage container. Knives and other equipment also should be bagged, brought out, cleaned and soaked for an hour in temperate water mixed half-and-half with bleach. It's also a good idea to carry sanitary wipes for cleaning your hands.

8 The deer should be tagged in the field, as required, and registered. If it is to be transported to a hunter's home, Elfering suggests that, upon arrival there, a tarp or other covering be laid on, say, a garage floor. The hunter, again wearing rubber gloves, should begin by removing the animal's legs to their shank. Again, note in the placement of various lymph nodes and try to avoid them. If the antlers are to be removed, avoid cutting into the animal's brain while doing so. Use a meat-cutting or other saw, then discard the blade or clean it thoroughly in the bleach solution. The base of the antlers should also be cleaned thoroughly.

9 Hang the animal head-down, perhaps from the garage rafters. Assuming you will butcher the animal yourself, begin skinning the animal from the rear legs downward. Again, wear rubber gloves. In the skinning process, you likely will encounter lymph nodes, which generally look like small fried scallops. These will attach themselves to the skin, the carcass, or be imbedded with connective tissue, the weblike membranes attached to the meat. The goal is not to know the placement of every organ of the animal's body. Instead you want to clean the carcass of all fat and connective tissue: Remove anything attached to the meat that isn't meat.

10 When the hide is skinned to the neck, the head can be severed. Department of Natural Resources officials who are field dressing deer in Aitkin County to be tested for CWD are using scalpels to cut through the spine and sever the head. Saws also can be used, though saws are more likely to dissipate spinal material than scalpels or knives are.

11 Elfering advises that hunters dispose of waste material either in the garbage or in a landfill that will accept it.

12 With the head severed, and all fat, membranes, and tissues cut from the carcass, you are ready to begin the butchering process.