

The potential health threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (prion disease) in deer has prompted the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to issue guidelines for the safer handling and processing of venison. The aim is to outline ways of reducing the risk of exposure during field dressing, skinning and processing. CWD is the deer equivalent of Mad Cow Disease. The disease usually show up in glands called lymph nodes:lumps of slimy gray, yellowish-brown or tan-colored tissue found next to organs.

Hunters and butchers should know what avoid and what to discard.

Healthy hunting

ANTLERS
To remove,use a saw designated for that purpose only, and dispose of the blade

EYES

TONSILS

NODES*

Locating tissue and organs where the disease causes the greatest threat of exposure

BRAIN
The neck has additional lymph nodes. It is stressed you remove the head and neck entirely.

HEAD AND NECK

SPLEEN
Size: About the length and width of a hand
Appearance: Stands out from other organs by its deep red-purple color

Location: Between the lungs and the rumen of the abdominal cavity
Removal: Gutting of major organs in the abdomen will remove

SIZE
Lymph nodes can be as small as a pea and as large as a quarter.

LYMPH NODE

SPINAL CORD

LUNG

RUMEN

INTESTINAL CAVITY

ATTENTION: The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Food Safety Division warns against eating a deer’s brain, eyeballs, spinal cord, spleen or lymph nodes.Handlers should never cut into the spinal cord. Remove head by cutting between neck vertebrae with a knife used only for that purpose.

PRESCAPULAR LYMPH NODE
Appearance: White, smooth, knobular, rounded, sometimes flattened
Location: Near the shoulder, on or near surface muscle tissue
Removal: Should come off with removal of the hide

SUBILIAC LYMPH NODE (Superficial)
Location: On or near surface muscle tissue
Removal: May stick to muscle but should come off with removal of hide

POPLITEAL LYMPH NODE (Deep)
Location: Between muscle directly behind knee
Removal: Peeling muscle by the seam should expose node

Tools for dressing and processing

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- A. Put on shoulder length rubber or latex gloves
- B. Do not use household knives or utensils to field dress

BONING KNIFE:
Long thin flexible blade

SKINNING KNIFE:
Short blade with rounded curves to aid in slicing away skin

FIELD DRESSING KNIFE:
Makes the job of creating the gut incision easier.

GUT HOOK

Safer field dressing (Gutting)

- 1** Begin the field dressing as you normally would.With the animal propped on its back, make only one major incision of the abdomen starting to one side of the penis or utter and containing up to but not past the breast bone.

2 Make a conventional incision by Extending index and second finger of Your hand palm up into a shallow initial cut. Position the knife blade edge up between fingers and guide blade slowly between your fingers toward the sternum.

3 Keep paunch pushed down with the back of your hand while cutting to avoid nicking internal organs.Make a cut encircling the anus and intestine. Then pull out the anus and tie it off with string. You should remove it by pulling it out of the abdominal incision with the rest of the gut pile.

4 Make a cut encircling the anus and intestine. Then pull out the anus and tie it off with string. You should remove it by pulling it out of the abdominal incision with the rest of the gut pile...roll animal on its side...contents should spill out...

Creating incision with gut hook

Initial incision

Knife blade up

Never coax entrails out with a knife, guide insides out with your hand only.

Safer processing (Butchering)

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Never cut into or through bones.
- If you nick a lymph node. Clean knife properly before continuing.
- Bone out the meat and remove all fat and connective tissue (the weblike membranes attached to the meat).
- If processing deer from the chronic wasting disease management or eradication zones, keep meat and trimmings from each deer separate.

Your goal is clean meat, trimmed free of fat and connective tissue

SHANK
ROUND
RUMP
SIRLOIN
HANGING TENDERLOIN
BACKSTRAP (LOIN)
SHOULDER

HANG THE DEER AND SKIN IT AS YOU ALWAYS HAVE.

- Skinning is a fairly simple task. It involves shallow detachment cuts and stripping (peeling) the hide downward.
- Hanging the deer head down may prevent some of the fluids in the head from draining down into the carcass.

■ Do not remove the lower legs with a saw. Skin to just below the shank, and then cut the hide away from the leg.

■ Remove lower legs with the same knife you've designated to remove the head and neck.

RESEARCH AND ILLUSTRATIONS by
DAVID ARBANAS/darbanas@journalsentinel.com

CAUTION: When you are finished processing the meat, clean knives, counters and equipment of residue and disinfect with a 50/50 solution of chlorine bleach and water and dry. Use disinfectant to soak knives for one hour.

Sources: Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Surgeon's Color Atlas of Large Animal Anatomy, A Hunter's Guide to Whitetail Details, Scott Craven; professor of wildlife ecology and wildlife specialist at College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Sheyboygan County Conservation Association, Field Dressing and Butchering Deer by Monte Burch, Quality from Field to Table by David L. Sperling, From Field to Freezer: Safe and Recommended Handling and Processing of Your Venison.