



FACT SHEET #18

FIELD DRESSING AND MEAT CARE

1. Tagging

Immediately after killing a big game animal, the appropriate tag(s) must be affixed and securely attached to the animal. Use caution and ensure that the animal is dead before getting too close to it. Always approach a big game animal from the rear. Poke its hind leg with a stick—not your rifle or bow—to see if it moves. The tag must remain attached to the animal and carefully skinned around to ensure it is attached.

2. Evidence of Sex, Species and Class

Evidence of sex, species and class must be retained (cannot be surgically or otherwise removed) on the carcass of big game animals, except black bear, until the carcass is delivered to either of the following:

- The usual residence of the person who killed the animal, and the carcass is actually being butchered, cut up and packaged for consumption. In the case of grizzly bear or cougar, the evidence of sex must be retained until the animal has been registered, or
- A premises* in respect of which there is a Food Establishment Permit issued under the *Public Health Act* or License for the Operation of an Abattoir issued under the *Meat Inspection Act*.
*Note: The evidence of sex, species or class cannot be removed until it is delivered to one of these premises.

Refer to the Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations for species specific information.

3. The Boning Out Method

The boning out method is a good way to cut down on the weight you'll have to pack out after a successful hunt in a remote location. Use this method to remove the meat from the bones as you field dress the animal.

4. Skin the topside of the carcass

With the animal lying on either side, start your first cut at the base of the neck. Cut through the hide but not the muscle underneath. Continue your cut lengthwise from the throat down the mid-line of the belly to the anus. Next, cut through the hide on the back of each topside leg at the knee. Continue these cuts downward to join the main cut you made along the mid-line of the belly. Make a circular cut through the hide around each knee joint. Now skin the complete upper side of the animal around to the backbone.

5. Remove the topside legs

Raise the topside front leg and cut it off by slicing through the meat from the armpit to the shoulder. There is no bone-to-bone connection in the shoulder. Just run your knife between the large flat shoulder blade and the ribs. Once the leg is severed, set it aside on a clean surface such as a tarp, game bag or the half-skinned hide. Next, raise the topside hind leg and carefully cut along the pelvis toward the ball and socket joint at the hip. Sever the joint and continue your cut through to the top of the pelvis until the leg is completely severed. Set it aside and ensure that the meat is elevated and allowed to cool properly.

6. Remove the topside backstrap and neck slab

Remove the topside backstrap by making two long, deep cuts lengthwise on the back of the carcass. The cuts will join at the backbone to form a "V" shape. Make the first cut down along the mid-line of the back to the point where the spine joins the ribs. This cut should run from the neck to the pelvis. Make the second cut along the side of the ribs and run it upward to join the first cut along the top of the rib cage. This cut should also run from the neck to the pelvis. When it's finished the backstrap should come off in one long strip. Next, fillet the slabs of muscle off the topside of the neck.

- 7. Repeat steps 3 and 4 on the other side**
Roll the carcass over onto the half-skinned hide to expose the other side. Skin the other half of the carcass. Then repeat the cuts and procedures described in steps 3 and 4 to remove the legs, backstrap and neck slabs from the other side of the carcass.
- 8. Remove the flank, tenderloin, liver and kidneys**
Carefully cut open the belly from the bottom of the rib cage to the genitals without puncturing the stomach or intestines. Do this by making a small cut where the diaphragm joins the ribs. Insert two fingers into the puncture to guide the point of the knife as you cut back towards the genitals. Next, cut away the flank and set it aside. Remove the guts and set aside the liver and kidneys. Remove the strips of tenderloin from the underside of the backbone between the ribs and pelvis.
- 9. Remove the ribs and heart**
Split or remove the brisket, then remove the lungs and heart from the chest cavity, placing the heart with your meat pile. If you plan on packing out the ribs with the bone in, remove the two halves of the rib cage with a saw or use a knife to cut through the cartilage where the ribs join the spine. To bone out the ribs in place, fillet the slabs of meat off the outside of the rib cage and then cut out the strips of meat from between the ribs.
- 10. Remove the remaining meat**
Next, check the carcass over carefully and remove any remaining pieces of usable meat. Finally, remove the meat from the legs you set aside earlier.

After you've removed all the edible meat you should be left with a gut pile and a clean skeleton.
- 11. Ensure that the meat is able to cool thoroughly .** Use of game bags helps protect the meat from the flies or other insects.

KEY CONTACTS

**Alberta Sustainable Resource
Development
Fish and Wildlife Division**

Dial 310-0000 and ask for nearest Fish and
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