

## Guide to Handling Venison Safely



Public Health, Delta & Menominee Counties

## **Guide to Handling Venison Safely**

Hunters will harvest thousands of deer in Michigan's Upper Peninsula this year. Contamination of game meat can occur when the animal is killed, field dressed, processed, handled or cooked. Whether you process your own deer or have the work done at a commercial processor the following guide can help to provide safe, quality venison.

### **IN THE FIELD**

A shot that kills the animal quickly and does not damage the stomach or intestines is the best start.

Field dress the animal immediately.

Wear disposable gloves to reduce risk of exposure to disease.

Do not allow stomach or intestinal contents, feces or urine to contact the meat.

Cool the carcass as quickly as possible.

Process the deer or take it to a commercial processor as soon as possible.

If the deer is going to hang before being processed, the meat should be maintained at 41° F, or colder.

### **AT HOME / CAMP**

Hang the deer and remove the hide.

Wear disposable gloves to reduce risk of exposure to disease.

Remove hair and other debris from the meat.

If any intestinal matter has contacted the meat rinse the carcass with potable water.

If intestinal matter, feces or urine contacts your hands or butchering equipment wash them thoroughly before continuing.

Remove the meat from the carcass.

Cut damaged meat away from the wound channel.

Avoid handling brain and spinal tissues and fluids.

Limit sawing through the spine.

Store the meat in a refrigerator or in a clean cooler with ice until further processing and packaging. Meat should be stored at 41° F or lower.

### **MEAT CUTTING AND COOKING**

Use a clean work area and surfaces.

Wash hands after handling raw meat and when changing tasks.

Limit the amount of time the meat is kept above 41° F.

Equipment that has been in contact with raw meat should be washed before it is used to handle cooked meats or other ready to eat foods.

Cook venison to a minimum internal temperature of 165° F.

Harmful bacteria such as some types of E. coli and Salmonella can be present in the intestinal tract of deer. Keeping the intestinal matter and feces from contacting the meat lessens the chance of an illness from one of these pathogens.

Cooling the meat quickly and keeping the meat cold prevents spoiling of the meat and multiplication of any harmful bacteria that may be present. The ideal temperature to safely maintain the meat is 41° F, or lower.

Parasites and bacteria can be present in the meat. Cooking venison to 165° F ensures pathogens are reduced to safe levels. Certain cuts of venison are arguably tastier when cooked to a lower temperature; however, lower temperatures may allow pathogens to survive the cooking process. Groups of people at a higher risk of contracting a foodborne illness include: children, the elderly, pregnant women and immunocompromised individuals. It is strongly advised that individuals in this group eat venison that has been fully cooked to 165° F.