

Make Sure Young Deer Hunters Know Safety Precautions

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — If you're taking a youngster out deer hunting for the first time this December, make sure he or she understands some important safety rules, says Earle Robbins, extension agent in Tioga County. Robbins is a Pennsylvania Game Commission volunteer, a hunting/trapping education instructor, and state 4-H shooting sports coordinator for Penn State Cooperative Extension.

"Young people handling firearms need to develop some important habits," says Robbins. Robbins offers these hunting safety tips:

- Make sure firearms are in good working order, and barrels and chambers are free of obstructions. Guns must be sighted in properly and have the proper sized ammunition.
- Familiarize yourself with the hunting site, so that you will know what's beyond your target. "Walk through the hunting grounds before deer season starts," Robbins says. "When you know the area, you can keep livestock and buildings out of the line of fire."
- Make sure every member of the group wears a combined minimum of 250 square inches of hunter orange on the head, chest and back.
- Assume every firearm is loaded. "When you pick up a gun, the first thing you should do is check it for ammunition," Rob-

bins says. "When you pass a firearm to someone else, leave the action open so there is no chance of it firing."

- Unload guns and leave the actions open when you are transporting them to and from the hunting area.

- Always keep track of where your gun is pointed, and keep your finger off the trigger until it's time to fire at your target. Never aim your gun at anything you do not plan to shoot.

- Know the location of all of the members of your hunting group. "Before separating, discuss where each hunter will be standing on watch and who will be walking through the woods," Robbins says.

- Don't shoot until you're absolutely sure of your target. Shooting at a sound or an undefined shape is inviting tragedy. "During deer season, this also means determining whether the deer is a buck or a doe," Robbins says.

- Unload your gun before climbing trees, scaling fences and logs, or jumping over ditches.

- If you have shot a deer and are preparing to dress it out, don't forget to unload your gun.

- Never engage in horseplay using a gun.

Youngsters can learn more about hunter safety and shooting sports in programs available at schools and through 4-H.

Family Living Focus

Beth Van Horn
Centre Co.
Extension Agent



HANDLE VENISON WITH CARE

To some people, venison is a gift of joy. During this hunting season, there are many people who are looking forward to enjoying a delicious venison for months to come. Let's review some basic tips to help make sure you have the tastiest and safest venison possible.

A deer shot in an unsuspecting moment is more tender and will be less "gamey" in flavor than a deer that is chased. Immediate and careful field dressing, immediate removal of all hair near exposed flesh, and prompt skinning are essential. When dressing a deer, be careful not to cut into the musk glands on the lower belly.

Venison is a good choice for healthy eating. A three-ounce piece of venison steak provides only three grams of fat. In comparison, a three-ounce piece of lean flank steak provides 13

grams of fat, and a three-ounce section of T-bone steak boasts 21 grams of fat. Cholesterol varies less between beef and venison. Both provide 85 to 95 milligrams of cholesterol per three-ounce serving. Cholesterol content per serving will diminish significantly only if you happened to shoot an old, well-traveled deer.

Venison is a delicacy that requires special treatment in the kitchen as well as in the field. Although game is handled much like the lean meat of its domestic counterparts, a few helpful hints can make the difference between a strong, "gamey" flavor and a delicious taste-tempting treat.

Game animals lead active, vigorous lives that keep their muscles firm and their bodies relatively lean. This makes their meat tougher and drier than domestic meat and poultry. One way to tenderize game meat is to cut the long muscles fibers by pounding, scoring, or grind-

ing. The tissues also may be softened by marinating with an acid such as lemon or tomato juice, French dressing, vinegar, or wine. A third method of tenderization is to cook the meat under pressurized heat. Game fat presents a special problem in cooking and storing. It turns rancid rapidly and should be trimmed closely before cooking and storing.

Game fat also has a strong flavor and solidifies quickly—more reasons to remove it. Basting the meat during cooking in its own juice or with a special marinade or sauce helps to keep the meat moist.

Never serve game rare or overcooked. Rare game is likely to harbor food-poisoning bacteria. Overcooked game will be safe to eat, but it will probably be tough and dry. Most sources recommend cooking game slowly at low temperatures (300 to 350° Fahrenheit) to reduce shrinkage and retain food value and flavor.

Cook roasts to an internal temperature of 170° Fahrenheit. Since all game has a dark surface when roasted and may appear more done than it is, use a thermometer to determine internal temperature. For safety's sake, serve all game dishes hot—above 140° Fahrenheit—and keep them cold—below 40° Fahrenheit.

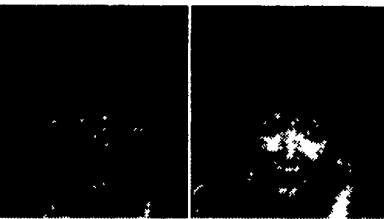
Store leftover game in the refrigerator in a closed, air-tight container for use within two days. Freeze leftovers for longer storage.



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