

WILD GAME



In general, all animal products – meat, poultry, eggs, etc. – donated to an Emergency Food Organization (EFO) must meet the same standards as animal products sold in a retail store. There are a few exceptions to this rule for some lower risk foods. Both donors and EFOs should take steps to make sure donated food is safe for clients. This guide addresses donations for wild game meat (deer, elk, migratory fowl, etc).

WAC 246-215-09415 allows for EFOs to receive donations of wild game by a licensed hunter or law enforcement officer. This is more common in rural areas but legal in every county.

If planning to donate wild game to an EFO, hunters can contact their local health jurisdiction to discuss a suitable process for dressing and transporting wild game to an approved meat cutter or processor. The hunter is responsible for storing and handling the carcass to prevent contamination and spoilage.

WILD GAME Donations Guide



Source

Must be licensed through Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Hunters should contact their county health jurisdiction prior to the hunt to determine agreed upon kill and transport process.

Processing

At all stages of processing and transport, the carcass and meat must be accompanied by a written statement identifying the name and address of the person who killed the game; the license, permit or tag number; the kind of animal provided; the date killed; the county and area where it was taken; and the hunter's signature.

Game meat must be processed by an approved county inspected meat cutter. Visit WSDA Food Safety's website for a list of WSDA-licensed processors, or contact your local health jurisdiction. Find your local health jurisdiction at doh.wa.gov/about-us/washingtons-public-health-system/washington-state-local-health-jurisdictions.

Labeling

WAC 246-215-09415 requires wild game meat to be labeled with the animal type, processor name, processor address, any allergen information, and the statement:

"Uninspected wild game meat, thoroughly cook to 165F (74C) internal temperature."



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

**FOOD
ASSISTANCE**



Anyone possessing wild game killed by someone else must have a signed statement identifying the person who harvested the game; the license, permit or tag number; and other details confirming that the wildlife was legally acquired.

DOH: Department of Health

EFO: Emergency Food Organization (food banks, food pantries, meal programs)

USDA: U.S. Department of Agriculture

WDFW: WA Department of Fish and Wildlife

WSDA: WA Department of Agriculture

Wild Game: Includes reindeer, elk, deer, antelope, water buffalo, bison, rabbit, squirrel, opossum, raccoon, and non-aquatic reptiles; does not include Ratites (emu, ostrich)

Meat: Muscle from slaughtered animal

Jurisdiction: Local or county health department or district

WAC: Washington Administrative Code

RCW: Revised Code of Washington



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture

**Food Safety and
Consumer Services Division
Food Assistance**

foodassistance@agr.wa.gov

agr.wa.gov/services/food-access

AGR PUB 609-559 (R/4/24)

Do you need this publication in an alternate format?

Please call the WSDA Receptionist at 360-902-1976 or TTY 800-833-6388.

Transportation and Storage

Carcasses must be transported frozen or at a temperature of 35°F or lower. Cut meat should be kept frozen or at a temperature of 40F or lower. Frozen meat must be kept frozen at all times during transport and storage. Refrigerated meat should be used or distributed within 3-5 days, and frozen meat may be kept frozen 4-12 months. Thermometers should be used throughout all points of storage and transport for any meat and/or egg product.

Uninspected wild game meat cannot be stored or displayed alongside inspected and passed meat.

A Note About the Good Samaritan Donation Act

RCW 69.80.031 offers food donors protection from criminal and civil liability. However, it does not relieve donors and EFOs of their duty to act responsibly. The Act requires donated food be “apparently wholesome.” Animal products can visually look fine but still carry E. coli , Salmonella , or other illness-causing microbes. Food donors and EFOs should be able to help verify whether food is “apparently wholesome” by knowing the food safety standards and how food was handled before donation.