



Wild Game Donation Guidelines For Food Banks

Overview /Background

The donation of wild game while working with properly licensed and inspected processors, provides a nutritious source of protein to the clients served by food bank agencies. Wild game can be donated to food banks and network pantries as surplus. Examples of wild game animals include mammals such as deer, reindeer, caribou, elk, moose, antelope, bison, and rabbits. Other wild game donations may include certain kinds of migratory birds, fish, and seafood.

Major aspects to implement a wild game donation program include:

1. Partnering with a qualified food bank that services nonprofit hunger-relief programs
2. Developing funding partnerships to support the processing costs of the donated game
3. Developing written Food Distributor Organization (FDO) and meat processor agreements on the terms of the relationship.

Purpose

There is risk associated with wild game. It must be harvested, processed, stored, and cooked following safe food handling practices to reduce risks posed by bacteria, viruses, and parasites.

Wild game animals for donation must be legally harvested. Harvest, processing, donation receipt, storage, preparation, and service of wild game animals must comply with all applicable State and local regulations. Animals that have been poached or illegally harvested and have been recovered by a wildlife or other enforcement officer may be donated if there is a system in place that ensures the safety of the meat.

Wild Game Donator Requirements

Wild game donors are responsible for understanding all requirements of the local donation program before harvesting animal(s) and presenting it for processing. These requirements may include, but are not limited to:

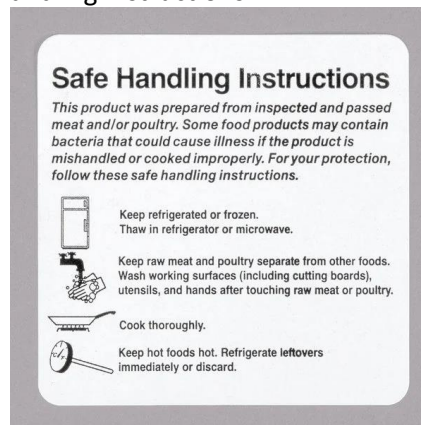
1. Compliance with State and local requirements for wild game harvesting and registering
2. Meet the maximum time allowed between harvesting and processing
3. Meet requirements for field dressing
4. Protection of the carcass during transportation
5. Compliant with maximum donation size - whole carcass versus quarters
6. Knowledge of approved processors that can participate in the local donation program
7. Responsibility for processing costs
8. Records available upon donation and written receipts for tax purposes



Wild Game Processor Requirements

The processor must comply with all applicable local regulations for harvesting, processing as well have an understanding the recipient’s donation requirement BEFORE participating in the program including but not limited to:

1. Be properly licensed/inspected; or meets local regulations for exemption to process wild game.
2. Processor has a formal process of accepting and rejecting carcasses. Examples for rejection may include: the meat upon delivery is at an unsafe temperature (over 41°F); the carcass is severely damaged or has signs of spoilage.
3. Complies with any testing required by local regulations – for example, x-raying of meat taken with metal ammunition, or testing for animal diseases, prior to release of the meat for human consumption.
4. Has knowledge of what form(s) the recipient organization will accept the meat (whole cuts, ground meat, or combination). Further processing of wild game meat such as curing, smoking, drying, fermenting and sausage is not recommended and may not be allowed by local regulations.
5. Provides appropriate packaging:
 - a. The preferred or maximum package size
 - b. The preferred packaging material (freezer/butcher paper, secured plastic bags, vacuum packaging)NOTE: Most recipient organizations prefer to receive the meat frozen for ease in transportation, storage, distribution and to prevent cross-contamination
6. Complies with required labeling. Some local labeling requirements may include:
 - a. Uninspected meat may be required to contain the words “NOT FOR SALE” on the label
 - b. Processing date
 - c. Processing location - business name, address
 - d. If applicable, the establishment processing license number, inspection mark and/or plant #
 - e. Posting of Safe Food Handling Instructions:



7. Provides safe storage and/or transport of the meat between the processing facility and the recipient organization including methods to keep the meat cold (below 41°F or frozen).



Wild Game Recipient Requirements

Organizations that receive donated wild game meat should have guidelines in place for accepting or rejecting deliveries.

1. If your organization chooses to accept donations of wild game, verify that the local health authority permits donations of this nature
2. Wild game donations must be inspected at receiving for:
 - a. Temperature of the meat must be 41°F or colder. If the meat is received in a frozen state, the packages should be solid frozen with no evidence of thawing.
 - b. Individually packages must have the required labeling:
 - Name of the game animal
 - Name and location address of the processing facility
 - Not an Inspected Product” or “Not for Sale”
 - KEEP FROZEN
 - Cook to 165°F for minimum of 15 seconds.
3. Wild game meats must be stored under refrigeration (41° F or colder) or freezer 0°F, or frozen solid) and with adequate capacity.
The estimated volume of meats to be received.
4. Nutrition information on game animals is available on the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference at <http://ndb.nal.usda.gov/> by using the search function to find information on the species of interest.

Notes

This guidance was developed with information from multiple sources (network examples, subject matter experts, external health, and safety organizations). Food banks should consult with State and local public health agencies and other sources as needed to meet local wild game donation requirements. Implementation.

References:

<http://www.foodprotect.org-food-recovery-2016-version.pdf>

[https://www.congress.gov/bill-116th-congress-house-bill/2291/Wild Donation Act 2019](https://www.congress.gov/bill-116th-congress-house-bill/2291/Wild%20Donation%20Act%202019)

<http://congressionalsportsmen.org/policies/state/game-meat-donation-programs>

<http://www.feedingtexas.org/solutions/hunters-for-the-hungry/>

<https://idahofoodbank.org/wild-game-food-donations/>

<https://mfbn.org/hunters-against-hunger/>



Addendum

Wild Game Food Safety Procedures

Reference: Conference of Food Protection

Harvest:

- Determine that the animal appears to be healthy; does not exhibit obvious signs of illness. Comply with any postmortem inspection requirements per state or local laws.
- Eviscerate the animal within an hour of harvest.
- Field dress the animal unless facilities are available at a nearby processing plant.
- Cut the carcass into quarters if needed.
- Chill the meat as quickly as possible to refrigeration temperatures.

Transport:

- Protect the meat from contamination during transport by cover, and separation from non-food items.
- Maintain the meat refrigeration temperature at 41°F or below.

Processor:

- Use a state or federally inspected plant or custom exempt facility.
- Ensure the processor has the space, facilities, and equipment to handle wild game meat.
- Receive for sale or service only game animals that are not on the list of endangered and threatened wildlife plants and animals listed in [50 CFR 17](#).
- If receiving game animals for sale or service, they should be:
 1. Commercially raised for food; and
 - a. Under a voluntary inspection program by an animal health agency, or
 - b. Under routine inspection program by a regulatory authority other than the animal health agency; and
 - c. Raised, slaughtered, and processed according to:
 - i. Laws governing meat and poultry; and
 - ii. Determination of need for ante & post-mortem exam
 2. Under voluntary program by USDA relative to exotic animals such as reindeer, elk, bison. Also includes the Rabbit Inspection Program by USDA.
 3. Live caught wild game – *if approved* by the regulatory authority
 - a. Under routine inspection program
 - b. Slaughtered and processed according to:
 - i. laws governing meat and poultry
 - ii. Determination of need for ante & post-mortem exam
 4. Field dressed wild game – *if approved* by the regulatory authority; under a routine inspection program that ensures the animals have:
 - a. Post-mortem exam by an approved veterinarian or veterinarian designee, or
 - b. Field dressed and transported according to requirements of agency having jurisdiction,
 - c. Processed in accordance with laws governing meat and poultry.



Addendum

Wild Game Food Safety Procedures (continued)

Reference: Conference of Food Protection

Receipt:

- Examine the carcass or quarters for general cleanliness and quality; determine whether the product can be further processed or needs to be rejected.
- Record the date, source, and species of the donated wild game. Retain this information with the product, and in plant records.
- Freeze the carcass or quarters if not immediately processed.
- Store the carcass or quarters physically separate from other food products and from approved sources, if using common refrigeration equipment.

Processing:

- Separate the processing of wild game meat from other meat processing by space and time.
- Disassemble, clean, and sanitize equipment and food preparation surfaces prior to and following processing and packaging to preclude any cross-contamination.
- Portion wild game meat only into steaks, roasts, stew meat, or grind.
- If the carcass or quarters are frozen, keep them frozen during processing and packaging. Do not thaw.
- Any fat added to the ground meat must come from a state or federally inspected plant.
- Wild game meat may NOT be cured, smoked, dried, or fermented or processed into other products.

Packaging and Labeling:

- Individually package and label the finished product.
- Ensure the label clearly and conspicuously states:
 - Name of the game animal
 - Name and location address of the processing facility
 - "Not an Inspected Product" or "Not for Sale;"
 - KEEP FROZEN
 - Cook to 165 °F for 15 seconds.

Storing and Distribution:

- Maintain frozen product temperatures of 0°F or less.
- Protect from contamination by covering meat and storing separate from raw, ready-to-eat product.

Cooking and Service:

- Thaw meat in a refrigerated unit or as part of the cooking process.
- Cook all parts to an internal temperature of 165°F for 15 seconds.
- Hold cooked portions at an internal temperature of 135°F prior to service.
- Avoid repeated cooling and reheating. Rather choose to cook and serve for same day service



SAMPLE FORM:

Agreement to Participate as Wild Game Donation Program Partners

We, the undersigned, agree to participate in a joint project to help feed people in need

FROM: _____ TO _____
(Date) (Date)

At the end of this time, both parties will review the partnership and renew or terminate the relationship.

AS PARTNERS, WE PLEDGE TO:

- *Abide by agreements we have made;*
- *Provide management and supervision necessary to oversee staff performance regarding monitoring and maintaining safe food temperatures; protecting food from contamination by hands, equipment and utensils, sick workers and other sources of hazards.*
- *Promptly communicate unsatisfactory conditions, situations, or performance to the partner; and*
- *Acknowledge each other's satisfactory performance.*

(Signature and date, donor representative)

(Print name of donor representative)

(Signature and date, food distribution organization representative)

(Print name of food distribution organization representative)



SAMPLE FORM:

Record of Shipment and Receipt of Donated Wild Game Meat

Date:		Transport Driver (Print Name):						
Donor Facility:					Person-in-Charge:			
Address:					Phone:		FAX:	
Food Distribution Organization (FDO):					Person-in-Charge:			
Address:					Phone:		FAX:	
Donors Data: Print name - shipment overseer:					FDO Receiving Facility: Print name - person overseeing receiving			
Food Item	Condition before transport	Departure Temp °F	Properly Labeled Y/N	Comments	Condition at receipt	Arrival Temp °F	Properly Labeled Y/N	Comments

Complete the form in duplicate. Copy one for donor; Copy two for FDO (Food Distribution Organization)

[Insert Food Bank Logo]