

OHIO HUNTERS SHOULD TAKE FOOD SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WHEN PREPARING DEER CARCASSES

With Ohio's deer hunting season in full swing, Ohio Agriculture Director Fred L. Dailey reminds hunters to practice proper food safety precautions while preparing the carcass.

"Foodborne illness is a very real and serious threat for hunters processing meat on their own," said Ohio Agriculture Director Fred L. Daily. "We recommend hunters take their deer carcasses to meat processing plants which are either state or federally inspected."

If hunters do decide to process the meat on their own, there are some important food safety guidelines they should use when handling the carcass.

As with all raw meat and poultry processing, it is important to follow basic food safety rules when processing venison. A clean work environment and equipment, including clean hands and proper personal hygiene, are a must. To avoid premature spoiling of the meat, the deer must be properly bled out and field dressed immediately after the kill and the meat should be chilled to refrigeration temperature as soon as possible. As hunters are processing the carcass, they should be careful not to contaminate the venison with dirt, hair, feces, urine, or other materials which could carry harmful bacteria.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture's Division of Meat Inspection ensures the safety of meat and poultry at the 283 state inspected processing plants, with the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service responsible for federally inspected plants. It is legal to process venison without inspection for personal consumption, but local ordinances may prohibit processing within some city limits. Food service operations must use inspected meat and poultry products.

A fact sheet on step-by-step sanitary dressing procedures is available by calling the department's Division of Meat Inspection at 1-800-282-1955.