

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact:
Jennifer Miller, 608-266-1683
Elizabeth Goodsitt, 608-266-1683

State Health Agency Urges Safety When Processing, Cooking, and Eating Wild Game

Caution recommended for all wild game including venison, bear meat, and birds

As Wisconsin's gun deer season gets underway, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) wants to remind hunters, their families, and anyone who serves or eats wild game or birds to [make sure the meat is handled properly and cooked thoroughly before it is eaten](#).

"Wild game meat, including venison, bear meat, and wild fowl may contain a variety of bacteria and parasites that can cause illness in humans if the meat is not properly cooked," cautioned State Health Officer Karen McKeown. "Even healthy-looking animals can carry germs that can make you sick."

Over the past two years, there have been outbreaks of [trichinellosis \(trichinosis\)](#) and [toxoplasmosis](#) in Wisconsin residents who ate undercooked meat from bear and deer infected with the parasites that cause these diseases. In addition, eating raw or undercooked wild game meat can result in several other illnesses, including [Salmonella](#) and [E. coli](#) infections.

While some illnesses caused by eating wild game may only result in mild diarrhea that goes away on its own, others can be more serious. More severe symptoms may include bloody diarrhea, fever, chills, swelling of the face or lymph nodes, and damage to the heart, lungs, and other organs. People who become sick in the days or weeks after eating wild game should contact their health care provider and let them know that they have recently eaten wild game.

DHS encourages hunters to follow these recommendations for safely enjoying wild game meat and fowl:

At harvest:

- Do not eat wild game or fowl that appeared ill before being killed.
- Hunters who harvest deer in areas of the state where Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is known to exist are encouraged to have their deer tested for CWD. If CWD testing is being conducted, do not eat or give away venison until CWD test results are known to be negative.

While processing and prepping:

- Wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while processing and handling wild game.
- Carefully remove the intestines to avoid contaminating yourself and the meat with intestinal germs.
- Wash hands with soap and water after processing game or handling raw meat.
- Thoroughly clean knives, equipment and surfaces (including tables and cutting boards) that have come into contact with raw meat.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling or cleaning wild fowl or game.

While cooking:

- Cook all wild game (e.g., venison, bear) to a minimum internal temperature of 160°F as measured by a meat thermometer. Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness.
- Cook all wild fowl (e.g., duck, goose) to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F as measured by a meat thermometer. Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness.
- Do not rely on freezing, smoking, or curing game meat to make it safe to eat, as these steps may not kill all bacteria and parasites.