



Wild Game Guidelines for Community Programs

Provincial Food Regulations under the Alberta Public Health Act prohibits the preparation and service of uninspected wild game for public consumption in facilities such as restaurants or schools due to food safety risks. However, in First Nations communities where wild game is a recognized source of traditional food, cultural enrichment, and nutrition, it is acknowledged that the “process for increasing access to traditional foods in community programs and facilities needs to come from the Nations”, as stated in the Alberta First Nations Food Sovereignty Declaration. These guidelines are intended to complement traditional knowledge and provide guidance on food safety requirements to communities seeking to serve wild game in community programs as a source of traditional foods.

The safety of serving game meats is highly dependent on the source, handling procedures, storage and final preparation. Certain harvest areas may have limitations which prevent or limit hunting of specific animals. Local hunters and/or your local Fish and Wildlife Officer should be consulted to determine where these restrictions are in place. Each community may have their own person(s) that specializes in traditional practices to ensure food safety, such as experienced and knowledgeable hunters and/or Elders that regularly prepare wild game. It is acknowledged that hunters have methods for determining the health of an animal before it is killed and consumed.

The following recommendations address potential food safety concerns, and are intended to prevent foodborne illness from eating improperly prepared game meat. These recommendations are intended only as guidelines, as each animal must be individually assessed for safety based on the training and experience of the hunters, processors and food handlers on-site.

First Steps:

- Community programs should receive written consent from leadership and/or Elders to provide uninspected wild game on their menu.
- Inform your local Environmental Public Health Officer. Wild game for a community program should be processed and prepared at an establishment(s) that has been inspected and approved by an Environmental Public Health Officer. A Certificate of Approval should be issued annually to facilities which are approved for preparation and serving of wild game as part of their program.
 - The Certificate of Approval should be displayed prominently within the facility.

Receiving and Inspection:

- Community programs should only accept donated meats from experienced hunters who are knowledgeable in hunting, field dressing, and are able to recognize signs of illness, weakness or abnormal appearance. The hunter and/or program receiving the meat should contact a local Alberta Fish and Wildlife Office if further information is required regarding hunting.
- Upon receiving, check the temperature, and examine the meat for any signs of contamination (ex: hair, shot, gut materials), or poor condition (ex: bruising, improper colour, odour).
 - Do not receive or keep products that have any signs of contaminants or poor condition.
 - Do not receive or keep fresh products that are above 4°C
 - Do not receive or keep frozen products that are partially thawed, as this may be an indication of improper temperature control.

- Receive wild game in food grade wrapping/packaging whenever possible. Immediately rewrap or repackage any products received in unapproved packaging (ex: garbage bags, grocery bags, cardboard).

Upon receipt at the facility, Environmental Public Health Officers may request random samples of each carcass for microbiological analysis.

Labelling and Tracking:

- Ensure that all packages are labelled with the date of harvest, hunter name (tag #), type of animal, animal part and the label "UNINSPECTED".
- Ensure that the meat is received accompanied by a copy of the **Hunting and Processing Form**.
- Ensure the **Wild Game Tracking Form** is filled out, and filed along with the Hunting and Processing Form, for future reference. Environmental Public Health Officers may request to review these forms.

Storage:

- The meat should be stored in a manner to prevent contamination of other foods.
 - Store uninspected meats in a separate, labelled refrigeration or freezer unit.
 - If separate units are not available, uninspected meats should be stored on the lowest shelves, and covered to prevent blood contamination of ready-to-eat foods, and foods obtained from approved sources.
- Store the meat in a refrigerator unit which can maintain a temperature of 4°C (40°F) or colder. If the meat is not to be used within 2-3 days, it should be kept frozen in a unit capable of maintaining -18°C (0°F) or colder until use.
- Wildgame should be consumed within one year of harvesting.

Preparation:

- Persons preparing food for a community program should have a valid *Food Sanitation and Hygiene Certificate*, and a thorough knowledge of food safety practices. Preparation, cooking and serving should be in accordance with accepted food safety practices.
- Once the product has thawed, it should be examined for any signs of spoilage (ex: change in meat texture, colour, odour, etc.) prior to use.
- Uninspected wild game should be prepared physically separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods, and foods obtained from approved sources. Surfaces and equipment should be properly cleaned and sanitized after coming into contact with uninspected wild game.
- Uninspected wild game should be thoroughly cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 74° C (165°F). Serving of rare meat is not permitted.
- Individuals should be informed when uninspected wild game is served.
- Parental consent should be required for minors to participate in community programs serving uninspected wild game. It is the responsibility of the facility/program to provide these consent forms. All consent forms should be retained for at least 30 days after the meal.
- The Wild Game Tracking Form should be updated with the date of use, and kept for at least 30 days after the meal.

Game meat obtained in the wild is very nutritious, high in iron and low in fat. Food safety from the harvesting of the animal to the dinner table is important to prevent foodborne illness. If there are any concerns about the quality or safety of the food, it should be discarded.

For more information about wild game for public consumption, contact the local Environmental Public Health Officer:

Environmental Public Health Services
First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Alberta Region
Edmonton Phone: (780) 495-2712
Calgary Phone: (403) 299-3939

Useful Websites:

Food Safety for First Nations:

www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-safety-vulnerable-populations/food-safety-first-nations.html

Food Safety for First Nations People of Canada: A Manual for Healthy Practices

www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/services/first-nations-inuit-health/reports-publications/health-promotion/food-safety-first-nations-people-canada-manual.html

Wildlife Diseases:

aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/default.aspx

Chronic Wasting Disease – Information for Hunters

aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/fishing-hunting-trapping/hunting-alberta/chronic-wasting-disease.aspx

Harvested Wildlife and Human Health (Food Consumption Advisories):

mywildalberta.ca/hunting/safety-procedures/harvested-wildlife-human-health.aspx

Alberta Fish and Wildlife Offices:

aep.alberta.ca/about-us/contact-us/fish-and-wildlife-area-office-contacts.aspx

Environmental Health Guide for First Nations – Your Health Outdoors:

www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/fniah-spnia/alt_formats/pdf/promotion/public-publique/home-maison/fn-pn/winter-hiver-eng.pdf