

As a deer hunter, you are probably aware of chronic wasting disease, or CWD, first found in Wisconsin white-tailed deer in 2002. Recently another concern has risen: the possibility of bullet fragments contaminating venison and posing a health threat to humans. And deer may also suffer from other diseases as well.

CWD

According to the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that chronic wasting disease passes to humans. However, many people still prefer to take extra precautions to remove prions from venison. These are the abnormal proteins associated with CWD.

Lead in venison

Lead is known to damage the brain and central nervous system, especially in young children and pregnant women. It does not always cause outward signs of illness. The risk depends on the amount and frequency of venison consumption. Although no one has linked human health effects to lead in venison, the amount found in some samples suggests that lead poisoning could occur in people who regularly eat venison shot with lead ammunition. Some of the fragments in venison samples have been found far from the wound channel and were too small to see during processing.

To help you remove both prions and lead fragments from venison, we offer these common sense guidelines for field-dressing deer, and cutting and processing venison.

For more information about lead in venison:

**Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade and Consumer Protection**

<http://www.datcp.state.wi.us>

**Wisconsin Department of Natural
Resources**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/wildlife/lead.htm>

Wisconsin Department of Health Services

<http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/lead/WIInfo.HTM>

**Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade & Consumer Protection**

Division of Food Safety
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P.O. Box 8911
Madison, WI 53708-8911
608-224-4700



Common Sense

*Handling and
processing venison*

Remove prions

Avoid lead fragments

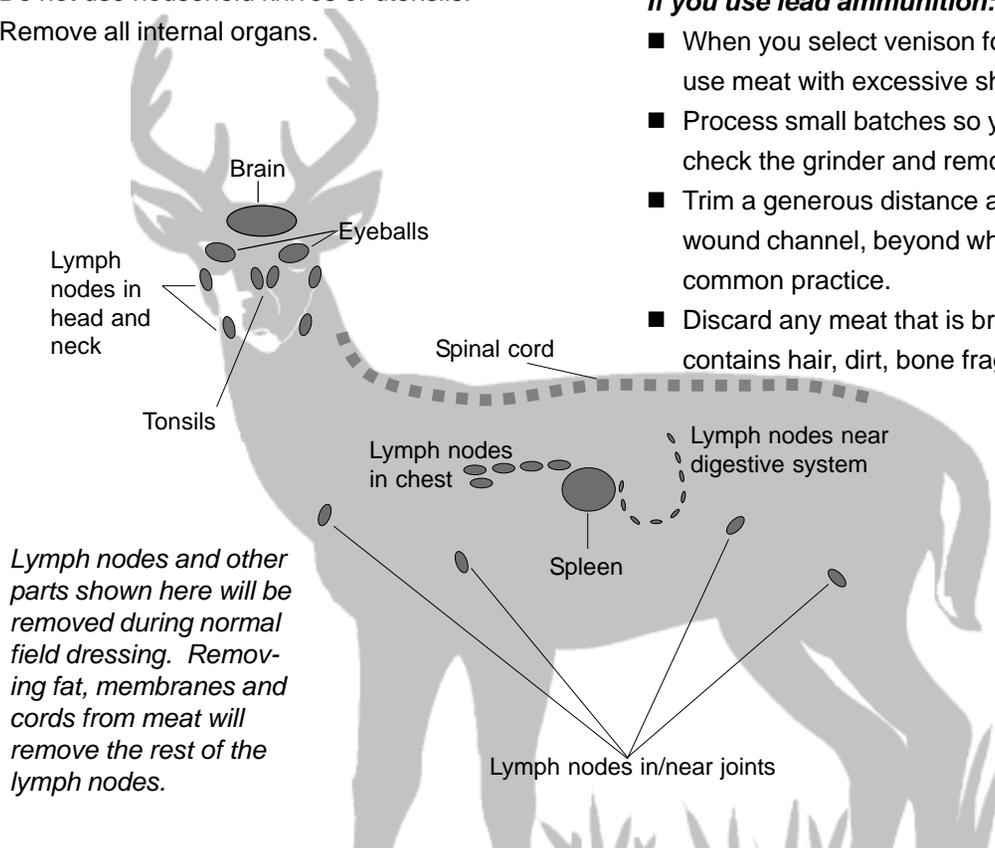
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture,
Trade & Consumer Protection
Bureau of Meat Safety and Inspection

General precautions

- Do not eat the eyes, brain, spinal cord, spleen, tonsils or lymph nodes of any deer. (See diagram.)
- **Do not eat any part of a deer that appears sick.**
- If your deer is sampled for CWD testing, wait for the test results before eating the meat.

Field dressing

- Wear rubber or latex gloves.
- Minimize contact with the brain, spinal cord, spleen and lymph nodes (lumps of tissue next to organs or in fat and membranes) as you work.
- Do not use household knives or utensils.
- Remove all internal organs.



Cutting and processing

- Wear rubber or latex gloves.
- If processing deer from the CWD management zone, keep meat and trimmings from each deer separate. (See map)
- Minimize handling brain or spinal tissues. If removing antlers, use a saw designated for that purpose only, and dispose of the blade.
- Do not cut through the spinal column except to remove the head. Use a knife designated only for this purpose.
- Bone out the meat from the deer and remove all fat and connective tissue (the web-like membranes attached to the meat). This will also remove lymph nodes.

If you use lead ammunition:

- When you select venison for grinding, do not use meat with excessive shot damage.
- Process small batches so you can frequently check the grinder and remove lead fragments.
- Trim a generous distance away from the bullet wound channel, beyond what has been common practice.
- Discard any meat that is bruised, discolored or contains hair, dirt, bone fragments or grass.



Cleaning up

- Dispose of hide, brain and spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, bones, and head in a landfill or by other means available in your area.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize equipment and work areas with bleach water after processing.
- Clean knives and equipment of residue and disinfect by soaking them for an hour in a 50/50 solution of household chlorine bleach and water.
- Wipe down counters with a 50/50 solution of household chlorine bleach and water, and let them air-dry.