



# CHAPTER 4: GAME CARE – BEFORE AND AFTER THE SHOT

## Objectives:

- Know the vital areas of various game species.
- Know best shot placements for firearm and bow.
- Know how to approach downed game.
- Know how to take care of game in the field.
- Know how to transport game out of field.



Game care starts long before you squeeze the trigger or release the arrow. You must be responsible to take care of your game in order to assure that the food you are taking is going to be of the highest quality. Do not risk the quality of your meat by hunting on an 85 degree day in September, if you have no way to keep game cool.

## When to Shoot, Where to Aim?

The goal of every responsible hunter is to make the quickest and cleanest kill possible. In order to do this, you must first know where the vital area on your game is located.

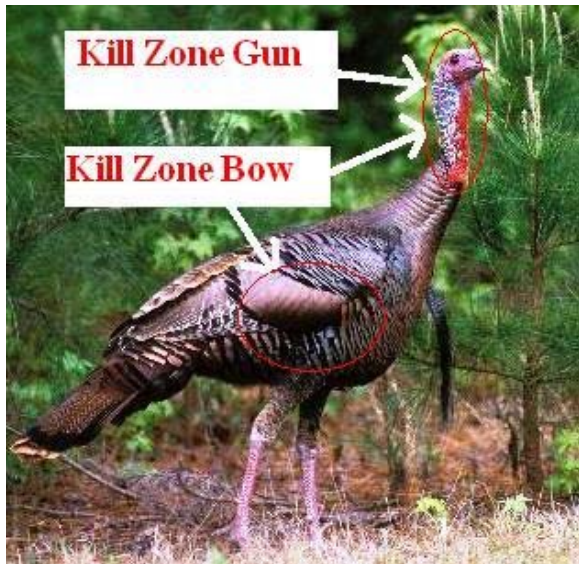
## Small Game

For small game and bird hunting you will want to aim for the head. Although body shots are many times effective, much meat may get destroyed. Take extra care to lead out in front to ensure a good head shot. Be aware of your effective range, which is about 40 yards depending on the choke and shot size being used. Do not skybust (shoot at birds on the edge of your effective range) in the hopes of getting a lucky pellet to harvest a bird. Be aware while hunting waterfowl that non-toxic shot must be used. Remember, since steel is lighter than lead you may have to use a larger size shot. Not all old guns can use steel shot.

## Turkey

When turkey hunting with a firearm, the only acceptable shot is the head and neck. A body shot with the shotgun, even at close range will

**NOT** kill the bird. You need at least 13 pellets in the head and neck region to ensure a clean kill.



Practice at the range long before the season to know the limitations of you and your gun. A 20 gauge with a modified choke may only be effective at 20 yards while a 12 gauge with an extra full turkey choke may be effective at 40 yards. Never shoot at a bird in full strut. Wait for him to get out of display with his head and neck fully extended. Make sure the shot is clear and there are no other birds behind your intended target. There are many new types of turkey loads on the market which are heavier than lead and are very effective. However, do not depend on these to make irresponsible far or difficult shots.

## Big Game

For big game the vital organs are the heart, lungs or liver with the best shot being a double lung. Although, the head is a vital area on big game it is a low percentage shot and



should never be attempted. The shot selected should be an animal within your personal effective range, that is standing still in the clear, unaware of your presence. Even a small branch can deflect your arrow or projectile from hitting the intended target.



An alert deer at close range will have time to react to your shot, effecting where you hit. Difficult shots should not be taken.

The two best shots with the bow or the gun are broadside and quartering away. Remember to pick a spot on the deer. You are not aiming at the whole deer but at a spot smaller than the size of pie plate. On a broadside shot, you will want to aim several inches behind the shoulder on the lower half of the body. When aiming at the same deer quartering away, you need to aim at the opposite front shoulder in order to hit both lungs. Not all mechanical broadheads are capable of making quartering away shots. Know the limitations of your equipment. Remember to pick a specific spot and not



aim at the whole. When hunting out of a tree stand, the deer can also be too close. You NEVER want to shoot at a deer straight down. The back bone covers much of the vital area and it is near impossible to hit both lungs from this angle. A deer can live with one lung. If the deer is directly underneath you, wait until he gets

out at least 10 yards and presents a broadside or quartering away shot.

Most poor shots that lead to missed or wounded game are not because the hunter is a bad shot, but because the hunter has made a bad choice. Bad judgement may cause a hunter to shoot too far or at an animal at a bad angle. The hunter may feel he has to rush the shot or shoot at an animal moving too fast. Don't be tempted to make a bad decision because the trophy is unusually large or the season is almost over. You must not let the excitement of the hunt cloud your mind into making one of these bad choices that may lead to missed or wounded game.

## After the Shot

After the shot, watch where the deer runs. Listen carefully, did you here the deer collapse? Mentally mark the spot where the deer was standing when you shot and the last place you saw the deer. Look at your watch. Note what time you shot and wait at least 20 minutes before you get out of the stand. Even though a well placed shot will kill the animal within five to ten seconds you will still want to wait just in case the animal hasn't expired yet.

Look at where the animal was standing when you shot. Are there scuff marks, broken vegetation, blood or hair. Is my arrow on the ground? What does the blood look like? Pink frothy blood indicates a lung hit. Bright red a heart hit. Dark slimy blood indicates a liver hit. An animal shot in the liver may live longer. Wait several hours before trailing. Slimy brown and green digested plant matter is a gut shot. A gut shot deer shouldn't be trailed for at least six to eight hours. When hunting with the



gun, you kill the animal through shock power. With archery, you kill the animal through loss of blood. A gut shot deer dies from a fever. This means that the deer will go into water to try to cool down. Look in swamps, creeks and ponds.

When tracking a deer, stay on the side of the trail. Don't disturb the blood, you may need to come back. Look for blood on vegetation off the ground as well. Flag the trail as you go along. If you lose the blood, go back to the last flag and search in ever increasing circles until you pick the blood up again. An extra set of eyes can help in tracking, however keep group size to a maximum of three so the blood trail doesn't get too disturbed.



Approach a downed deer with caution. The antlers and hooves can be extremely dangerous. Watch from a distance to see if the animal is breathing. If the animal doesn't appear to be breathing, approach from behind the head. Are the eyes open? Use a long stick to touch the eye. If the eye closes the animal is still alive. A dispatch shot should be used.



After determining that the deer has expired, the first thing you must do is fill out your transportation tag in ink.

2006 Transportation Tag - Deer	
6-Day Firearm Only	Harvest Number 000008362
CID#: 000-019-406    FREDDY C KRUEGER    1875	
Upon harvest, immediately complete the below information in ink and affix to Deer. Check is must be completed before 8PM. ANTLERED BUCK #TUB MUST ACCOMPANY THIS TAG.	
Date Of Kill: / /	Time Of Kill:    AM    PM
County Of Kill:    New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife	Number Of Points:    Right    Left
Twp. Of Kill:    Fish and Wildlife	Sex (circle only ONE):    M    F
Zone Of Kill:    Fish and Wildlife	
Signature X	

If you are an adult, this is found on your license or permit. Farmers and youth need to make a home made transportation tag that

includes name, address, date, county, township, sex of deer, number of antler points per side, and zone where deer was harvested,

## Field Dressing the Game

Once you have successfully tagged the deer you may field dress the deer. Make sure you have latex gloves on before you start. You do not need a large knife to do the job. A sharp knife with a three inch blade is plenty big enough. Watch chapter nine in the Hunter Education Video for step-by-step instructions. Remember the three basic rules for keeping your game the highest quality.

- Keep the animal **clean**. Do not allow hair, dirt, flies, leaves or other debris to get into the animal's carcass.
- Keep the animal **cool**. Remove the animal's organs as quick as possible after tagging the animal. To maximize the quality of the meat, allow the animal to hang for at least 7-10 days or until rigamortous is gone, if conditions allow. The best temperatures to hang meat are 32-40 degrees.
- Keep the animal **dry**. Do not allow the carcass to become or remain wet. This creates a bed for bacteria to grow on. Wipe off blood with a dry cloth or paper towel. Place carcass in a dry area.

## Transporting Game

Don't be confused for game. Flag the game with hunter orange (big game) or conceal it (small game) while



transporting it out of the field. Don't injure yourself by trying to drag something that is too heavy for you. Go get help. Try to avoid dragging your game through water or dirt.

Remember, deer and turkey must be brought to a check station the same day as soon as possible. A list of check stations is found in the **NJ Fish and Wildlife Hunting Digest**. If you get to the check station and it is already closed, you must call your NJ Fish and Wildlife Regional Law Enforcement Office and leave a message on the machine, including which check station you plan on taking the animal to the next morning. The phone numbers, for all the Division offices, are found on the inside cover of the **Digest**.

## Preparing Game

Many people agree that wild game is healthier and tastier than domestic raised meat. It is extremely low in fat and cholesterol.



As a result, it has a lower moisture content and can dry out when it is not cooked properly. Cook at high temperatures for shorter periods of time or low temperatures for longer periods of time. Meat that has been properly taken care of should not be gamey or tough, but a fine delicacy.