



The new rule requires that anyone who salvages a deer or elk carcass obtain a free permit.

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Washington state allows salvaging road-kill deer, elk

Each year, motorists strike and kill more than 3,000 deer and elk on Washington state highways. Now people can legally salvage those carcasses under regulatory changes approved by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission.

The commission, which sets policy for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), adopted the new rule in April 2016 after receiving a strong showing of public support for allowing the recovery of edible meat. Nearly 20 states – including Idaho and Montana – now allow the public to salvage road-kill wildlife, although their rules for doing so vary.

Washington state's new rule applies only to deer and elk killed by motor vehicles. In addition, only elk – not deer – may be salvaged in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties where federal laws prohibit handling endangered Columbian white-tailed deer.

Anyone who takes possession of a deer or elk carcass must obtain a free, printable permit from WDFW within 24 hours. Those permits are now available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/road-salvage/>.

The permittee must keep a hardcopy of the signed and dated salvage permit with the meat until all of the edible parts are consumed.

Those who consume salvaged meat do so at their own risk. WDFW does not guarantee that the meat is fit for consumption, and encourages those planning to salvage deer and elk carcasses to review its Wild Game Meat Food Safety website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/meat_safety/.

The new salvage rule also does not authorize trespassing on private property or ignoring highway-safety rules.

Summary of legal provisions

The state's new road-kill salvage rule is codified in WAC 232-12-287 - *Possession of dead wildlife* - which states:

- An individual must obtain a free salvage permit within 24 hours of taking possession of a deer or elk killed in a motor vehicle collision.
- The entire carcass, including entrails, of the animal must be removed from the road right-of-way.
- Individuals cannot kill an injured deer or elk they find in order to get a salvage permit.
- Big game licenses and tags cannot be used in lieu of a salvage permit for deer or elk killed in a motor vehicle collision.

Deer and elk highway fatalities

An average of 2,994 deer and 83 elk died in automobile collisions on state highways each year from 2000-04, according to study of accident data completed by WDFW in 2008. A majority of those fatalities occurred

in late fall and early winter, when the animals are especially mobile due to both breeding and state hunting seasons.

Not surprisingly, collisions are most frequent in high-traffic corridors where large numbers of deer and elk are present. In eastern Washington, these areas include highways north of Spokane; in the Methow River Valley, and near Wenatchee, Goldendale and Omak, according to the Washington State Department of Transportation.

In western Washington, vehicle collisions with elk and deer are more widely distributed, but are most notable on Whidbey Island along State Route 20 and State Route 525; in the Packwood-Randle area on U.S. Highway 12; and on Interstate 90 near North Bend.

WDFW's new salvage-permit system will also help to pinpoint road-kill "hotspots," supporting ongoing efforts by transportation managers to reduce collisions with wildlife on state highways.

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