

# The Basics of Deer Hunting in Washington



*Photo by: Jerry Green*



**Washington Department  
of Fish and Wildlife**  
Wildlife Program  
Hunter Education Division  
April 2019

**(This page intentionally left blank.)**

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	5
License and Tag Choices .....	6
Deer Species.....	7
Black-tailed deer.....	7
White-tailed deer .....	8
Mule deer .....	10
Columbian white-tailed deer.....	12
Deer identification tool.....	12
General Deer Information.....	12
Food and Feeding Habits.....	13
Tracks.....	15
Droppings .....	15
Bedding areas .....	16
Rubs .....	16
Scrapes .....	16
General Deer Hunting Techniques.....	16
Hunting Equipment.....	17
Archery equipment .....	17
Muzzleloader equipment .....	19
Modern Firearm Equipment.....	21
Clothing and Concealment .....	22
Knives .....	25
Optics.....	26
Calls to use.....	26
Where to Go.....	27
Hunting Ethics .....	28
Shot placement.....	28
Broadside.....	28
Quartering away.....	29
Quartering to.....	29
Head on .....	29
Rear end .....	29
Tracking.....	29
Tagging .....	30
Field Dressing.....	30
Skinning.....	31
Processing .....	32
Hunter Reporting .....	32
NOTES.....	34
Ten Basic Safety Rules.....	35

**The information contained in this manual was collected from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife website ([wdfw.wa.gov](http://wdfw.wa.gov)) and its employees unless otherwise cited. (2016)**

# Introduction

Welcome to deer hunting! This course should provide you with basic knowledge about deer hunting in Washington State and give you a general guide to be successful. It should also serve to help you in your hunting pursuits.

In our Basic Hunter Education course, we teach students how to hunt safely. This course is designed to give you an overview of the biology and habits of Washington's deer species and how to hunt them effectively. This guide will also help teach you about game handling, hunting equipment regulations and choices, correct shot placement, hunter reporting, and much more. These topics will help you become more knowledgeable as a hunter and make the animals you harvest become great table fare.

One thing to remember when pursuing any animal is that it is called hunting for a reason. You may not be successful in harvesting an animal every day, or every season. That's part of the enduring challenge and fun of hunting. Each season brings a new opportunity to hone your skills. To properly set your expectations, check the annual harvest statistics, which are posted on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/harvest>.

For most of us, hunting is about much more than a successful harvest. It's about spending time afield bonding with family and friends, watching the sunrise over the mountains on a crisp fall morning, and having exciting stories to tell when you get home.



*Photos by WDFW and Shari Brewer*

## License and Tag Choices

WDFW offers many different licenses that allow you to deer in Washington. Unlike many other states, Washington offers species-specific big game licenses that include a transport tag in the cost of the license. This system allows you the flexibility to buy each species option individually, or receive discounts if you buy a bundled multi-species package (see below for an example of big game license packages). You can also receive a discount if you purchase your small game license and a big game license together. Remember that you will not receive the discount unless the license items are purchased at the same time.

The licenses listed below are available for purchase by any hunter over-the-counter and give you the ability to hunt during the general hunting season.

The general season big game license choices are as follows:

- Deer, Elk, Bear, and Cougar License
- Deer, Elk, Bear, and Cougar License W/discounted Small game
- Deer and Elk License
- Deer and Elk License W/discounted Small game license
- Deer License
- Deer License W/discounted Small game license
- Elk License
- Elk License W/discounted Small game license
- Bear License
- Bear License W/discounted Small game license
- Cougar License
- Cougar License W/discounted Small game license

Big game licenses are issued based on species option, but transport tags are more specific. For deer, you must declare a weapon type (archery, muzzleloader, or modern firearm) to receive your transport tag. If you haven't decided on a weapon type when you buy your license(s), you can choose to have your tag printed later, but make sure you get your tag before you hunt.

Deer can be hunted with archery, muzzleloader, or modern firearm hunting equipment. The hunting seasons for deer are broken down by equipment choice. Making hunters choose their season and equipment helps prevent overcrowding during the hunting season. WDFW sets the season length based on harvest rates and seasonal animal surplus projections.

A hunter who chooses archery can only use archery equipment during the archery season. Muzzleloader season tag holders can use archery or muzzleloader equipment during muzzleloader season. Those hunters who choose modern firearm can use archery, muzzleloader, or modern firearm equipment during the modern firearm season. Remember that you may only hunt in the season that matches your tag.

# Deer Species

Washington State is home to four subspecies of deer. Of those four, hunters are able to hunt three, black-tailed, white-tailed, and mule deer. The fourth is the Columbian white-tailed deer, which is currently on the endangered species list.



*Photo by Antony Sirgedas*

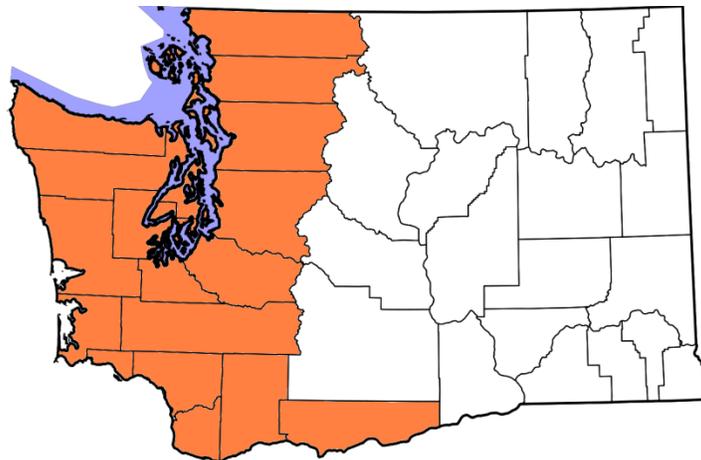
## Black-tailed deer

Successful hunting for black-tailed deer is primarily a function of the effort, focus, and energy that hunters put into the hunt. Black-tailed deer thrive in heavily vegetated habitats and are often nocturnal in nature. This means that successful black-tail hunters must be in position early in the morning and carefully hunt near sources of food and in secure cover.

Black-tailed deer hunting is often best near the end of the general season, as conditions in the heavily vegetated west-side improve for stalking and moving

through the woods quietly. The best opportunity often occurs during the late buck hunt, when favorable stalking and weather conditions combine with the breeding season or rut. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer. Bucks travel more during the rut, when they cover large amounts of territory searching for does in estrus. This makes bucks more vulnerable as they spend less time hiding and are sometimes found in “open” habitats, like clear-cuts and meadows.

Here is a map of where you may expect to see these deer:



- Species description
  - Black-tailed deer occur from the crest of the Cascades west to the Washington coast, preferring brushy, logged lands and coniferous forests.
  - The tail is broader and the backside of the tail is covered with dark brown hair that grades to black near the tip.
  - Adult black-tailed deer bucks weigh 140 to 200 pounds and adult does weigh 90 to 130 pounds.
  - The antlers have a main beam that forks in adult bucks.
  - Dark colored belly
  - Grey to brown face
- Shelter and range needs
  - Black-tailed deer normally reside within a one half to three square-mile area. In mountainous locations, they migrate to lower elevations for the winter.
  - Deer numbers differ among habitat types and the highest deer densities are associated with five to seven-year old clear cuts. These young tree stands provide large amounts of both cover and food.
  - Those areas with cover are more likely to contain deer for the majority of the day.
- Hunting techniques
  - The traditional approaches to hunting black-tails include stand hunting or still-hunting in high use areas (clear cuts, highly traveled trails, funnels, bedding areas etc.) until the deer show up.
    - Sitting in a blind or tree stand can be a very effective way to hunt black-tails
  - Hunt the edges
    - Watch edges of tree lines and fields. Deer like to hug these areas for quick escapes and movement into cover.
    - Spot and stalk can work when hunting large clear cuts. This technique is generally not an efficient way to hunt black-tails in areas with very thick undergrowth and brush.

## White-tailed deer

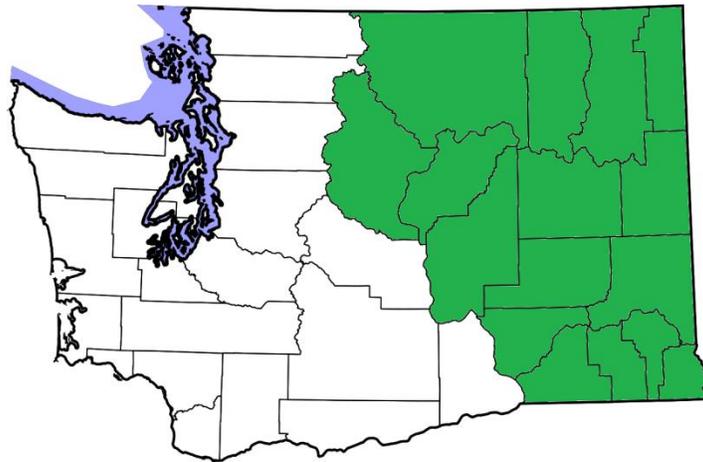
White-tailed deer are generally found in the eastern third of Washington. Look for whitetails along stream drainages and in other areas with riparian vegetation or thick cover. Whitetails actively use edge habitats where denser cover abruptly transitions into more open meadows. Many white-tail hunters will wait patiently at a stand along an obvious game trail or the forest edge, often employing the use of a blind or tree stand. The majority of hunting success is near or adjacent to agricultural fields or recent forest



*Photo by Larry Smith*

timber harvest areas where deer are present and much more visible than in adjacent habitats. However, deer typically use these more open areas at night, dawn, and dusk, especially if they have been disturbed by human presence. Therefore, it is advantageous for hunters to seek out areas some distance away from these openings, where there is more cover available, since the deer are spending more time there. If a hunter is seeing large amounts of deer sign in an area, then odds are those deer are not far away. White-tailed deer densities are highest along the valleys and foothill benches bordering valleys in the farm-forest mosaic. These areas are highly productive both in crops and deer production.

Here is a map of the white-tailed deer's distribution in Washington.



- Species description
  - White-tailed deer coats are often reddish tan in summer and brownish gray in winter. They get their name from their broad, 10 to 11 inch-long tail. When alarmed, white-tailed deer raise their tail, displaying the white underside.
  - Adult white-tailed bucks weigh 150 to 200 pounds and adult does weigh at 110 to 140 pounds.
  - Antlers have one main beam with tines extending vertically in most cases.
  - White facial markings
  - Light colored belly
- Shelter and range needs
  - White-tailed deer are found across a wide variety of landscapes in eastern Washington, from low land riparian areas along water courses to high elevations in the mountains.
  - The highest densities are associated with agricultural lands at lower elevations. Whitetails are present near populated areas.
  - White-tailed deer home ranges vary considerably in size in eastern Washington. Some annual home ranges are relatively small (three square miles) or quite large in seasonal migratory white-tail populations.

- Hunting techniques
  - The traditional approaches to hunting whitetails include stand hunting or still hunting in high use areas (e.g., clear cuts, highly traveled trails, funnels, and bedding areas)
    - Sitting in a blind or tree stand is a very effective way to hunt white-tails
  - Rattle and grunt calls to simulate two bucks fighting over a doe is more common with mid-western and eastern white-tailed states, but can be effective here as well, especially in the days leading up to the rut (deer breeding season) in mid-November.
  - Hunt the edges
    - Watch edges of tree lines and fields. Deer like to hug these areas for quick escapes and movement into cover.
    - Spot and stalk can be an efficient way to hunt white-tails where the habitat is more open.



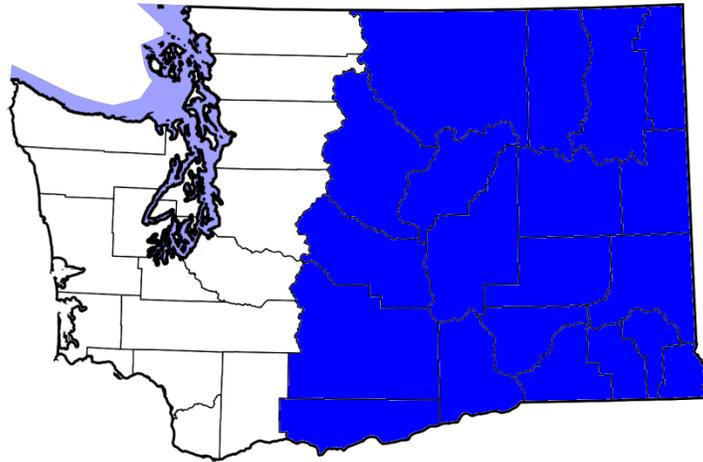
*Photo by Susan Jensen*

## Mule deer

Mule deer are present across most of eastern Washington. Mule deer populations in eastern Washington exhibit a variety of seasonal movement patterns, with migratory herds moving up to 50 straight line miles between summer and winter ranges to resident animals with annual home ranges similar in size to resident white-tail populations. Migratory mule deer are often at high elevations in remote locations as long as succulent vegetation is available. Although mule deer will use a variety of habitat types, they will often forage well into fairly open environments, particularly at dawn and dusk. As a result, they can often be glassed and stalked from considerable distance. A typical hillside of mule deer habitat in the Cascades over the growing season and through the fall will change from bright green in the spring and summer to light green or yellow, to orange, to red, to brown, then to bare branches.

While we see changes in color, mule deer are perceiving changes in forage quality. The summer forage that supports deer and gives them the opportunity to produce young and grow antlers does not retain its high quality all year. As it changes, so do the habitats that deer occupy. Even large expanses of sagebrush can give deer the security they need. In the broken coulee country, topography becomes security and riparian vegetation provides food resources. Deer in these areas often become experts at living in small, secure habitat pockets where they meet their needs and avoid hunters.

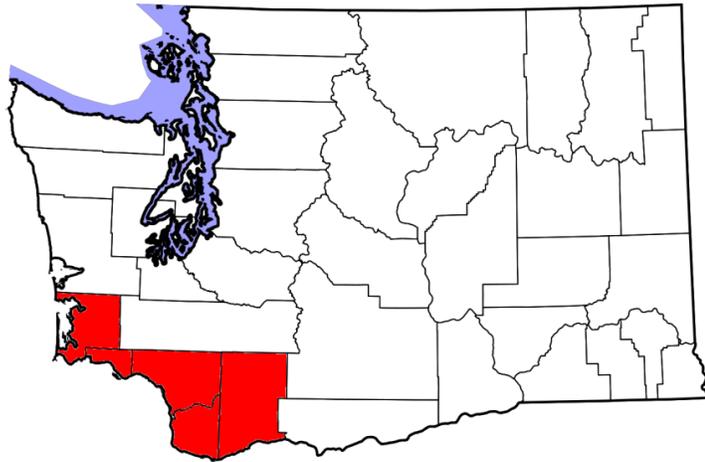
Mule deer hunters can expect to find mule deer in the following areas:



- Species description
  - During the summer, mule deer coats are often reddish-tan to light brown. During winter, they are a salt-and-pepper gray.
  - They have large, dark-edged ears, from whence they derive their name.
  - The seven to eight inch ropelike tail of a mule deer is white, except for a black tip.
  - Adult mule deer bucks weigh up to 250 pounds and adult does weigh 110 to 200 pounds.
  - The antlers have a main beam that forks
  - Face is greyish in color
  - Darker colored belly
- Shelter and range needs
  - They occur in eastern Washington at all elevations.
  - Mule deer generally move long distances during spring and fall migrations to avoid mountain snow. Mule deer summering in the Cascades migrate as far as 50 miles to reach adequate winter range.
- Hunting techniques
  - The classical western method of hunting mule deer is called spot and stalk. Here the hunter uses good optics, binoculars, and spotting scopes to scan from ridge tops and other vantage points to find the mule deer, pick out suitable bucks, and then stalk them to within shooting distance. Ordinarily the stalk entails a strategic hike and cautious sneak action.
  - Some mule deer hunters employ stand or still hunting techniques
  - Hunt the edges
    - Watch edges of tree lines and fields. Deer like to hug these areas for quick escapes and movement into cover.

## Columbian white-tailed deer

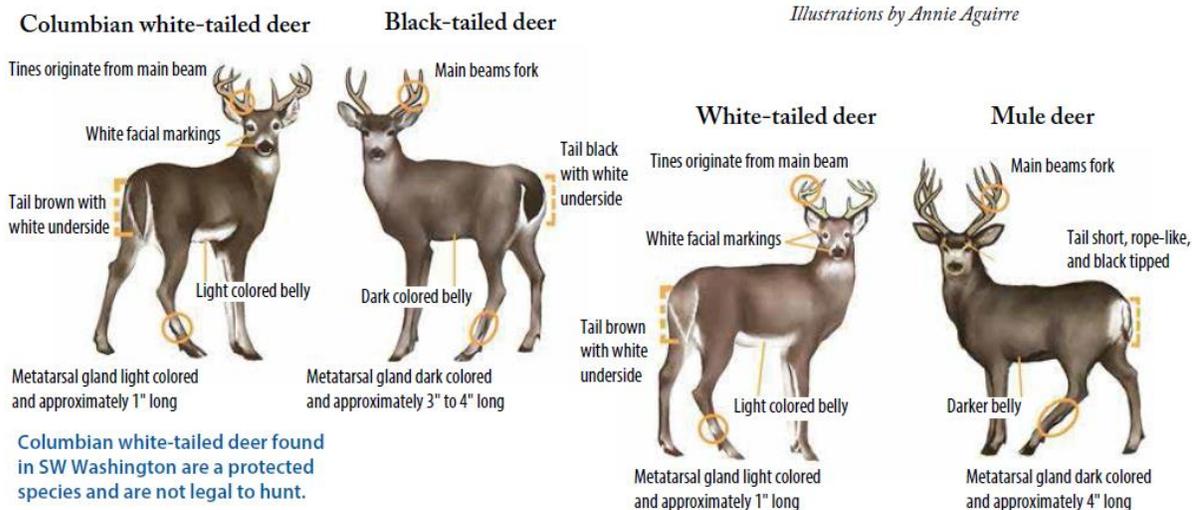
The Columbian white-tailed deer shares portions of its range with the black-tailed deer in western Washington. When hunting in those areas, be sure of your target. To the right is a map of the Columbian white-tailed deer range.



The Columbian white-tailed deer is a federally and state listed endangered species and cannot be hunted, so is not discussed in depth in this booklet. To learn more about the Columbian white-tailed deer, see <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/odocoileus-virgianus-leucurus>.

## Deer identification tool

Below is a graphic depicting each of Washington's deer species. This should help hunters to quickly identify deer. The tails will help identify the species of deer when they are a doe or a two point buck. Make sure to clearly identify if a deer is legal before harvesting.



## General Deer Information

Deer are creatures of habit, so knowledge of deer habits and movement patterns are valuable to hunters in finding deer during different times of the day and season. Deer are most active during the early morning and late afternoon-evening.

## Food and Feeding Habits

Deer tend to feed before dawn, and if undisturbed, continue until several hours after sunrise. After feeding, deer will bed down for most of the middle hours of the day. Although it is common for bedded deer to get up and feed for 30 to 60 minutes around noon, then bed down again. Deer will return to feeding late in the afternoon and continue until after sunset.



*Examples of bushes browsed by deer  
Photo by WDFW*

Deer eat a wide variety of plants, ranging from newly sprouted grasses and forbs in the spring to fir needles during the winter. In general, deer tend to be browsers, eating the growing tips of trees and shrubs. In late winter and early spring, deer eat grass, clover, and other herbaceous



*A browse line  
Photo by WDFW*

plants. Deer also eat fruit, nuts, acorns, fungi, lichens, and farm and garden crops if available.

What foods a deer will prefer depends greatly on the species of deer and the habitat where they live (see the table below for species-specific food preferences). Look for areas where the trees

and other plants seem to have a line of missing limbs or leaves from the ground to about deer height. This may mean that deer are using this area as a feeding area. If you have a good vantage point, this may be a spot to try during the season.

## Food plants used by Pacific Northwest Deer

Mule Deer	Black-tailed Deer	White-tailed Deer
<b>Trees and shrubs</b>		
Serviceberry Sagebrush Deer brush Snowbush Rabbitbrush Red twig dogwood Winterfat Juniper Mock orange Ninebark Ponderosa pine Bitter cherry Douglas fir Bitterbrush Golden current Wild rose Thimbleberry Willow Snowberry	Vine maple Red alder Serviceberry Snowbush Deer brush Hazelnut Hawthorn Salal Douglas fir Oak Cascara Blackberry Thimbleberry Salmonberry Willow Elderberry Western red cedar Red huckleberry	Serviceberry Sagebrush Deer brush Crabapple Bitter cherry Douglas fir Bitterbrush Willow Western red cedar
<b>Forbs and Legumes</b>		
Balsamroot Prickly lettuce Twinflower Alfalfa Burnet Dandelion Clover Trefoil	Creeping Oregon grape Alfalfa Burnet Dandelion Clover	Pearly everlasting Balsamroot Fireweed Cat's ear Alfalfa Clover Vetch
<b>Grasses and Others</b>		
Wheatgrass Oats Cheatgrass Bluegrass Wheat Lichen Mushrooms and other fungi	Wheatgrass Orchard grass Fescue Lichen Mushrooms and other fungi	Oats Deer fern Bluegrass Sword fern Wheat Lichen Mushrooms and other fungi



*Photo by WDFW*

## Tracks

Deer will often have regular routes they use to travel through their home range. These travel corridors may become well-worn trails that look a little like narrow human footpaths. The trails may be clear of low vegetation, but are not bare unless they are in shade or are heavily used by deer and other animals. These trails are also known as game trails. Looking at muddy areas of the trails will help you identify the animals using the trail. Sandy areas generally do not hold tracks well. Dirt areas generally hold a track better than sand but not nearly as well as slightly moist mud.

Deer tracks are easy to identify. In a normal hoof print, the two roughly teardrop-shaped halves print side by side to form a split heart. When a deer is walking on a slippery surface, such as mud or snow, its hooves are likely to be spread into a V, which helps keep the deer from sliding forward. Deer tracks are one and a half to three and a quarter inches long. The smallest prints belong to fawns and the largest to adult deer. The small dewclaws shown here on a mule deer track may not register.



*Drawing by WDFW*

## Droppings

Looking for deer droppings is another way of determining if deer are present and using a particular area. Deer droppings vary greatly in size and shape, but are easy to identify. Most of the year they are deposited in a group of 20 to 30 dark cylindrical pellets with one flat or concave end and one pointed end. Individual pellets are one half to three quarters inch long and individual piles are four to six inches in diameter. When deer are feeding on moist vegetation, the pellets stick together and form clumps. New droppings have a shiny, wet appearance for a few days and then lighten in color as they age. Droppings in eastern Washington tend to turn a chalky white after several days because they dry out faster. Western Washington droppings will stay brown longer because they generally stay wetter. Just because you see droppings does not necessarily mean that there are animals in the area unless the droppings are fresh. However, seeing a lot of droppings indicates animals are using the area frequently as a feeding area or travel corridor away from a feeding area.



*Photo by WDFW*

## Bedding areas

Deer seek areas that provide security from disturbance when bedding. An area of flattened vegetation three to four feet long and two to three feet wide indicates where a deer has bedded down. Deer sleep in dense cover or tall grasses and may return to the same spot over many days. Since deer often travel in small groups, there may be several “deer beds” in the same vicinity. During winter, similarly sized depressions in the snow, often littered with old hairs, characterize bed-sites. If you know about these sites, it can be effective to set up near the site and watch for deer coming back to bed down after feeding.

## Rubs

Bucks rub off some of the velvet covering their antlers by rubbing them against young trees and shrubs. These rubbing sites also communicate their presence and breeding readiness to other deer. This communication has several facets: the visual sign left by the buck’s rubbing, chemical signals left from glands on the buck’s face, and the sound of the buck thrashing branches of the tree on which it is rubbing. Although antlers are bone white when the velvet is first removed, they become stained various shades of brown as plant compounds accumulate through constantly being rubbed by brush and trees. The color results from a chemical reaction of the plant compounds with the air, in a process known as oxidation.



*Photo by WDFW*

## Scrapes

Bucks make scrapes during the pre-rut period by scraping the ground with their hooves near the base of a tree or under lower hanging branches. Bucks commonly urinate on scrapes and rub their orbital glands (located just below their eyes) on any branches that hang over a scrape. Scrapes serve several functions, including marking a buck’s territory, providing a signpost of their presence, and advertising a place for does to find bucks during the rut.

## General Deer Hunting Techniques

There are four basic hunting techniques used in deer hunting: stand hunting, still hunting, spot and stalk, and driving.

Stand hunting is best described as waiting in ambush, where a hunter gets in position at a place along a trail, feeding site, or other deer use area and waits for a deer to present itself. Ground blinds or tree stands are commonly employed in stand hunting. Although many stand hunters just lean against a tree or sit on a stump near a likely area or travel corridor.

Still hunting requires the hunter to move very slowly and quietly through deer habitat in hopes of seeing a legal deer before the deer reacts to the hunter’s presence. Although all forms of deer hunting are challenging, still hunting is perhaps the most challenging. Successful still

hunters move at a snail's pace, taking 3 or 4 steps at a time, and then stopping to look and listen. It is important that the hunter move into or across any prevailing wind so as not to be smelled by a deer.

Spot and stalk hunting is where a hunter surveys areas likely to be used by deer, usually aided by binoculars or a spotting scope. Once a legal deer is spotted, the hunter then sneaks to within range of the deer in hopes of getting a shot. Spot and stalk is commonly used in more open deer habitats where deer can be spotted at a distance. It can also be used when deer have been observed by a hunter and the hunter has not been detected by the deer.

Driving is a combination of stand hunting and still hunting. It requires a group of hunters that are divided into drivers and blockers. The blockers are positioned at locations where deer are likely to move through when the drivers have been detected. The drivers advance toward the blockers through likely deer habitat in hopes of seeing deer or moving deer toward the blockers. This technique is commonly used in the upper mid-west United States when hunting white-tailed deer but can be applied in variant forms to hunting any of the deer found in Washington.

## **Hunting Equipment**

Legal hunting equipment is as diverse as the companies that create and sell them. There are huge books that have been written about all the different types of firearms and archery equipment and what their uses are. Since we only have limited space and time, the regulations behind the hunting equipment will be discussed below. There are also suggestions on different calibers and projectiles for each species.

Below are some suggestions and information on the different hunting equipment that you may need when hunting in Washington. These are just suggestions and you will need to find what works for you. This section details legal hunting equipment at the time of the writing of this booklet.

### **Archery equipment**

Archery equipment consists of many types of bows that are commercially available today. All of these bows have to meet the following criteria to be used to hunt big game in Washington State.

- Mechanical broadheads are legal to use for all archery hunting.
- It is unlawful for any person to carry or have in his possession any firearm while in the field archery hunting, during an archery season specified for that area, except for modern handguns carried for personal protection.
- Modern handguns cannot be used to hunt big game or dispatch wounded big game during an archery, big game hunting season.

- It is unlawful to have any electrical equipment or electric device(s) **except for illuminated nocks**, attached to the bow or arrow while hunting.
- It is unlawful to shoot a bow and arrow from a vehicle or from, across or along the maintained portion of a public highway.
- It is unlawful to use any device secured to or supported by the bow for the purpose of maintaining the bow at full draw or in a firing position.
- It is unlawful to hunt big game animals with any arrow or bolt that does not have a sharp broadhead, and the broadhead blade or blades are less than seven eighths inch wide.
- It is unlawful to hunt wildlife with any bow equipped with a scope.
- Rules pertaining to long bow, recurve bow, and compound bow archery:
  - It is unlawful for any person to hunt big game animals with a bow that does not produce a minimum of 40 pounds of pull measured at twenty-eight inches or less draw length.
  - It is unlawful to hunt big game animals with any arrow measuring less than 20 inches in length or weighing less than 6 grains per pound of draw weight with a minimum arrow weight of 300 grains.

Bows can generally be placed in one of two categories, compound or traditional. Compound bows are the most popular hunting bow because of their ease of use. The mechanics of the bow allow for the shooter to more easily draw and hold than the traditional bows. The compounds have what is called let off. At a certain point in the draw, the draw weight is reduced by as much as 85%. These bows are always strung and ready to go.

Traditional bows are either Long Bows or Recurve Bows. There is no mechanical let off when holding these bows at full draw. However, these bows are just as effective at harvesting animals as compound bows (if you are proficient with them). These bows have to be strung before use because if you kept the bow strung it would lose power by forming to the strung position.

There are several types of arrows available for hunters, generally constructed of wood, aluminum, or carbon fiber. Refer to the manufacturers table to determine which arrow type and size fit your bow and shooting conditions best. If you are unsure of the arrows to purchase, consult with an archery retailer and they can help determine which is appropriate for your bow.



*Photo by Melissa Yeisley*

Broadheads need to be used when hunting big game with archery equipment. These also come in many different shapes and sizes. Make sure the broadhead you are purchasing and using is at least 7/8" in diameter. You may want to purchase the same weight broadhead as the field points you are using for target practice to minimize sight adjustment in your bow.

Crossbows can be used in archery season IF you are a disabled hunter and have been approved for a special use permit through WDFW's ADA program. Please see the crossbow information within the Modern Firearm Equipment section since it is considered a modern firearm in regards to hunting in Washington.

## **Muzzleloader equipment**

As with archery equipment, muzzleloaders come in all makes and models. No matter who manufactures the muzzleloader, it has to meet the following criteria to be legal to hunt big game in Washington State:

- Muzzleloader: A firearm that is loaded from the muzzle and uses black powder or a black powder substitute as recommended by the manufacturer for use in all muzzleloading firearms.
- A muzzleloading firearm shall be considered loaded if a powder charge and a projectile, either shot or single projectile are in the barrel and the barrel or breech is capped or primed.
- It is unlawful to hunt wildlife using a muzzleloading firearm that does not meet the following specifications:
  - A muzzleloading shotgun or rifle must have a single or double barrel, rifled or smooth-bored.
  - A muzzleloading shotgun or rifle used for deer must be .40 caliber or larger. Buckshot size #1 or larger may be used in a smoothbore of .60 caliber or larger for deer.
  - A muzzleloading shotgun, rifle, or handgun used for all other big game must be .45 caliber or larger.
  - Persons lawfully hunting small game with a double barrel, muzzleloading shotgun may keep both barrels loaded.
  - A muzzleloading handgun must have a single or double barrel of at least eight inches, must be rifled, and must be capable of being loaded with forty-five grains or more of black powder or black powder substitute per the manufacturer's recommendations.
  - A muzzleloading handgun used for big game must be .45 caliber or larger.
  - A handgun designed to be used with black powder, including black powder percussion revolvers, can be used to hunt forest grouse, cottontail rabbits, and snowshoe hares.
- In addition to the above requirements, it is unlawful to participate (hunt) in a muzzleloading hunting season using a firearm that does not meet the following

specifications for a muzzleloader. As in the past, sabots are allowed. Any type of projectile is allowed.

- Ignition is to be wheel lock, matchlock, flintlock, or percussion. Primers designed to be used in modern cartridges are legal.
- Sights must be open, peep, or of other open sight design. Fiber optic sights are legal. Telescopic sights or sights containing glass are prohibited.
- It is unlawful to have any electrical device or equipment attached to a muzzleloading firearm while hunting.
- Those persons lawfully hunting big game with a double barrel muzzleloader may only keep one barrel loaded.
- Muzzleloading firearms used during a modern firearm season are not required to meet ignition, sight, or double barrel restrictions.



*Photo by Taiton Gillespie*

Muzzleloaders are a great way to hunt with a method that has been around for hundreds of years with the ability to shoot to distances of 100 yards or more. This equipment type is the least utilized by hunters in Washington State, but it may be because they are unaware of how accurate and fun muzzleloader hunting can be. The good news, if you choose to become a muzzleloader hunter, is that this means the woods are not nearly as crowded as they are for archery and modern firearm deer seasons.

Currently any projectile fired from a muzzleloader is legal as long as it meets the caliber restrictions mentioned above. This is good news because of the advancements in projectiles can help with accuracy and lethality. You should explore the new options and determine the right combination for you and your rifle. Also, if you are shooting a smooth barreled muzzleloader, you can shoot buckshot as long as the muzzleloader is .60 caliber or larger.

With muzzleloaders, make sure you use a black powder or black powder substitute that is rated for your muzzleloader. If you use the incorrect powder, it could be disastrous. Some other helpful safety hints include:

- Never fill the muzzleloader directly from the powder can as it could spark and ignite the powder in the can.
- Mark your ramrod when the muzzleloader is empty so you can make sure it is empty upon storage.
- Be sure to seat the wad and shot directly on top of the powder charge.
- Store powder and percussion caps in separate dry and cool places.

Beware a hang fire. This happens when the trigger is pulled, the percussion cap ignites, but the firearm may not go off. Make sure to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction for at least 30 seconds. If it still does not fire in that 30 seconds, put on another cap or re-prime the pan, and fire again. Make sure the nipple is clean on percussion locks.

## **Modern Firearm Equipment**

Modern firearm seasons are the most popular deer hunting seasons in Washington. This may have to do with the ability of modern rifles to be able to shoot very accurately at very long distances or because the timing of the season is closer to the deer rut. There are several different types of hunting equipment that are classified as modern firearm equipment. They are Rifle, Pistol, Shotgun, and Crossbow. Below are listed the regulations on the modern firearm hunting equipment by type:

### **Rifles**

- Big game, except cougar, must be hunted with a minimum of .24 caliber (6mm) centerfire rifle. Cougar may be hunted with .22 caliber centerfire rifle. Rimfire rifles are not legal for big game.

### **Handguns**

- Big game, except cougar, may be hunted with handguns with a minimum barrel length of 4 inches per manufacturer's specification, and fire a minimum .24 caliber centerfire cartridge. The minimum for cougar is a .22 caliber centerfire handgun. Rimfire handguns are not legal for big game.
- A modern handgun may be carried for personal protection. Modern handguns cannot be used to hunt big game (except as described above), or dispatch wounded big game during a big game hunting season for muzzleloading firearms.

### **Shotguns**

- Deer, bear, and cougar may be hunted with 20 gauge to 10 gauge shotguns shooting slugs or #1 or larger buckshot. Other big game may be hunted with a 10 or 12 gauge shotgun using slugs.

### **Crossbows**

- It is illegal to hunt big game with a crossbow outside of a modern firearm season. Crossbows cannot be used during an archery season.
- It is unlawful to hunt big game with a crossbow with a draw weight less than 125 pounds and a trigger safety that doesn't work properly.
- It is illegal to hunt big game with any arrow or bolt weighing less than 350 grains.
- It is illegal to hunt big game with any arrow or bolt that does not have a sharp broadhead and the broadhead blade or blades are less than seven-eighths inch wide.
- It is unlawful to discharge a crossbow from a vehicle or from, across, or along the maintained portion of a public highway.

There are so many rifle calibers available that will work for deer hunting it can be overwhelming. Some of the more popular hunting calibers for big game like deer and elk are .243, .270, 7mm mag, .308, 30-06, and any of the .300 magnums. These rifles and ammunition are generally available at most sporting goods stores since they are so popular. Animals are harvested by proper shot placement into the vitals, so the best deer rifle for you is one that you can shoot accurately and safely with confidence.



*Photo by Gerry Loney*

The rifles can fire many different bullets that have different weights and are made from different materials. The weight of a bullet is measured in grains. The more the bullet weighs, the more energy is transferred to the target. For deer hunting, a bullet that is 100-150 grains that will mushroom on impact is good. If you are planning on hunting elk as well, you may want to move up to a 180 grain bullet. The bullet makeup and design will cause it to act differently when striking a target. A bullet that has a polymer tip may be designed to mushroom faster and wider than a bullet with a lead tip. Many ammunition manufacturers are producing factory ammunition loaded with all copper bullets designed for big game hunting; these bullets perform well and have gained popularity in the big game hunting fields. When hunting for big game animals, like deer, you want a bullet that expends its energy in the target.

While hunting with a handgun is legal, it is not as popular as other methods. If this is something that you choose to do, make sure that the bullet is effective for the job you are asking it to do. Make sure that you are taking into consideration the weight of the bullet and that it will deform enough to cause a humane hit on an animal.

Shotgun hunting for deer is generally done within firearm restriction areas. However shotgun manufacturers do make rifled barrels for some shotguns that provide increased accuracy when using rifled slugs for deer. Remember not to shoot shot out of a rifled barrel as it could damage the rifling. Buckshot from a smooth shotgun barrel can also be effective when harvesting deer.

Crossbows were made legal to hunt with as a modern firearm in 2015. The crossbow is gaining popularity amongst hunters because of their accuracy and speed. They are also as quiet as a bow when fired.

## **Clothing and Concealment**

In hunting as in everything else, if you are not comfortable you won't enjoy your experiences as much as if you were comfortable. This is why how you dress is being covered in this manual.

Below are some suggestions on choosing clothing, hunter orange vests/patterns, blinds, and tree stands and finding what works for you is the key.

Remember to obtain permission from the landowner prior to placing ground blinds or tree stands and if you are on public land, check the regulations of the agency that owns the land.

## **Boots**

Hunting boots will help support your ankles and also keep your feet dry and warm. Wet and/or cold feet when hunting can make for an uncomfortable day. Some boots have insulation in them to help combat the cold. When choosing a boot, think about the kinds of hunting you will be doing and the temperatures in which you will be hunting. If you are primarily an eastern Washington hunter, you may want to get the boots with 2000 grams of insulation to help on those frigid mornings. But you also may have some hot foot issues when hunting early season in mid-October.

## **Layering**

When dressing for any hunt, make sure to take into consideration what you may be doing. Dressing in layers will allow you to regulate your body temperature more efficiently. The idea is to wear only the layers that you need to stay warm and dry at the time, but have the option to take a layer off or put another layer on if conditions change. In cool weather, for instance, you'll probably want to wear fewer layers to hike up a steep incline, but will want to put another layer or two on once you are setup at your hunting spot and likely to be sitting for a while. A tough pair of jeans or brush pants also may be a good idea to help protect your legs when working in brush.

## **Camouflage**

When archery or muzzleloader deer hunting, you can wear camouflage clothing to help conceal yourself. The number of camouflage patterns and manufacturers is dizzying. Just remember to try to match a pattern with the kind of habitat and climate you are going to hunt. Several of the bigger camo pattern companies have all purpose patterns that will work in a lot of different locations. These can be effective if you are unsure of where you may be hunting. If all else fails, you can use the old style of green, brown, and black camo that is common in popular culture. Remember to camouflage your face with a face covering or face paint and your hands with gloves.

The basic idea of camo clothing is to break up the outline of your silhouette and get you to blend into the habitat. Animals are instinctively afraid of humans and if they see the shape of a human, they will not stick around for you to possibly get a shot at them.

Sometimes no camo is better than a contrasting camo pattern. If you are hunting the desert and are wearing camo that is of cat tails designed for waterfowl hunting, you will stick out like a sore thumb. At that point, wear clothing that is similar in color to the surrounding country.

Also, because the weather in the Pacific Northwest is generally wet, having warm waterproof camouflage clothing can increase your comfort level and improve the experience.

## **Hunter Orange**

Hunter orange is required to be worn by all modern firearm deer hunters during the modern firearm season. The hunter orange clothing has to be at least 400 square inches, be above the waist, and be visible. It is recommended to wear as much hunter orange as possible to help other hunters see you when in the field. To maximize your use of the hunter orange, you may just decide to purchase an upland bird vest to use for all hunting you do that requires hunter orange. Hunter orange hats are also recommended when hunting in tall cover such as tall grass or alpine forest because they are visible over the tall cover and increase the chances that other hunters will see you. However a hat by itself will not satisfy the 400 square inch requirement.

## **Blinds**

Deer have outstanding vision, so minimizing movement and being totally concealed is the key. Ground blinds are becoming more and more popular. Commercial ground blinds are designed to pop up and provide total concealment on the ground. Just popping this blind up does not guarantee concealment, so try to place brush and cover around the blind to help conceal it. Make sure to keep the windows in the back zipped up so as to not silhouette yourself. Ground blinds should be set out in advance of your hunt, if possible, so the game become accustomed to the blind.

Blinds can also be constructed with burlap, 1 x 1's, spray-paint, and some string. Cut the 1 x 1's to about a four foot section. Drill holes in the 1 x 1's and lace the burlap to them. Spray paint the wood to be a dark color and put streaks of green, black, and tan on the burlap. You will then have your own blind that is easy to transport.

Depending on the surroundings, you may be able to fashion a very functional blind from available materials such as tree limbs, grass, cattails, or sagebrush. Be sure to "brush up" any blind with whatever natural vegetation occurs at the site you're hunting.

Where you build or place your blind may well be as important as how it looks and how well it hides you. As a general rule it's best to be situated with the wind in your face for deer. If you are not sure of the wind direction, there are wind indicators that can be purchased from sporting goods stores. One of the most used is a powder in a squeeze bottle that will create a puff of smoke and drift with the wind. Also you can use the old standby of picking up some dry grass and dropping that from about eye height and it should give you an indication of the wind direction.

## **Tree stands**

Tree stands are gaining popularity with hunters here in the northwest. These attach to a tree to bring you up from ground level and provide a bird's eye view of the landscape. Some tree stands require you to use a ladder to place it on a tree. But some are called climbing tree stands

because it allows you to climb the tree. When using a tree stand remember to ALWAYS wear and use a safety harness. Tree stand falls and accidents are becoming more and more frequent.

## Knives

There are about as many knives available in today's sporting goods stores as there are people to buy them. They have many different shapes, uses, designs, and materials. One thing to keep in mind is a sharp knife is a good knife. Some knives are designed specifically for different jobs. When picking a knife, you will want to find something that works for you. It is recommended that you keep a knife sharpener on hand for touching up the blade when needed. You also may want a bone saw because it will help when field dressing a deer and cutting through the pelvis. Any knife can be used to care for your game.

Skinning knives have a deep belly in the blade to help you not cut through the hide. Some of these knives also come with a hook that is commonly referred to as a gut hook. This is designed to be used to easily cut open the chest cavity of big game animals to remove the entrails.



*Photo by WDFW*

Boning knives are straighter knives with a thinner blade. They are designed to cut the meat from the bone. This process is called deboning.



*Photo by WDFW*

Caping knives are shorter blades that are used to remove the skin from a big game animals head region. They allow for more fine detail work so a hunter can have the animal mounted.



*Photo by WDFW*

Bone saws are great for cutting through big game animals pelvises. This allows the lower intestines to be lifted out of the body cavity rather than having to pull it through the pelvis and into the body cavity.



*Photo by WDFW*

## Optics

High quality optics, especially binoculars, may be one of the most useful pieces of equipment you can have in your deer hunting toolbox. These pieces of equipment can be a great asset in locating deer. They allow you to search vast stretches of habitat without having to hike. Optics will also allow you to verify the animal is legal before harvesting. You should never use your rifle scope to glass because it could be a safety issue. If there was an accidental discharge when glassing with your rifle, you could harvest an animal that is not legal or harvest an animal that is not a game animal.



*Photo by WDFW*

You will notice optics have a designation similar to 8 x 42. These numbers correspond to the construction. The first number is magnification. In the 8 x 42 example, the image is magnified eight times. The second number is the diameter of the objective lens of the optic. In the 8 x 42 example, the objective lens is 42mm wide. The higher the objective lens, the bulkier the optics can be. However, the larger the objective lens, the clearer the image will be, due to more light entering. You may want to go into a sporting goods store and test out some of the optics before deciding on a specific size or model.

With regards to optics, you get what you pay for. If you buy the cheapest pair of binoculars, they will work, but they may not last for very long. If you are going to spend a lot on one piece of equipment, it should probably be your optics. They can be used for wildlife viewing at other times of the year as well.

## Calls to use

Calls have generally not been used extensively for deer hunting in Washington. However the use of calls or other sounds associated with deer are gaining popularity in Washington and in other areas of the country. A less well-known or utilized calling technique is rattling and

grunting to simulate two bucks fighting over a doe in estrus. The rattling technique is more common with Midwest and eastern white-tailed deer hunters, but can be effective, particularly during the pre-rut period or where buck to doe ratios are high. Also a grunt tube can be used to signify that a buck is challenging the dominant buck. A doe in estrus call can also be effective during and near the rut.

**Grunt tube** – This call produces a grunting noise that dominant bucks use to let other bucks know who is in the area. This can be used in association with rattling calls for maximum effectiveness.



*Photo by WDFW*

**Rattling Calls** – These calls are used to imitate two bucks fighting over a receptive doe. This is great to use in conjunction with the grunt call. This method of calling is used very extensively in the Texas and the mid-west.

**Doe Bleat** – This call mimics a doe in heat call. This can be used where the buck to doe ratio is high. Bucks will come to this call because this noise indicates that a doe is receptive.



*Photo by WDFW*

## Where to Go

Finding hunting access on private lands in Washington State is becoming more of a challenge. However, there are still a number of options available to hunters on public land. WDFW's wildlife areas are good places to start. WDFW also has a lot of private landowners who have signed up to allow public hunting access on their lands. These lands can be found on the WDFW Hunting Access webpage <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations> as well as a booklet on how to find hunting access.

The "Hunting Regulations Webmap" provides users with a different way to review the Hunting Regulations. Users can explore regulations data by either selecting criteria for a search or clicking on the map to find out what hunts are available for their selected Hunt Type. In addition, it has the capabilities to look at public/private ownership, show private lands hunting opportunities, map water access sites, and display satellite imagery. The data shown in this webmap are an extension of the printed PDF pamphlet and not an authoritative source of WDFW hunting regulations. This tool is also available for use on smart phones. It can be found online at <https://geodataservices.wdfw.wa.gov/huntregs/>.

If hunters want to gain access to private property, they should scout their desired area and locate lands they might want to hunt. Once a hunter has located properties to hunt, he or she can knock on the door of the landowner. If the hunter can't locate a house, landowner contact information can be obtained from the county tax assessor office. Landowners may refuse to grant permission. If they do refuse access, make sure to thank them for their time. Hunters who are persistent in their search will most likely gain access to some lightly hunted areas and make

new friends along the way. Other options include hunt clubs and hiring a guide who has access to private farms and ranches.

The department's website contains annual hunting prospects that detail WDFW biologist's expectations for hunting for the current year's seasons. These prospects are broken into 17 districts that mark where a particular biologist is responsible. Hunters can find the hunting prospects online at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations>.

## Hunting Ethics

All hunters should be hunting ethically. There are many interpretations on ethics and what they mean, but before starting your hunt, think of what you believe is ethical and put it against what the public as a whole may think is ethical. Being ethical hunters will improve public perceptions of hunting and will benefit the sport. WDFW encourages you to raise your ethical bar to the highest level.

Some things that are considered un-ethical in regards to hunting are:

- Shooting at birds when they are outside your hunting equipment's effective range.
- Shooting birds while on the land, water, or foliage
- Hogging all of the shots from your hunting party
- Shooting a deer or elk at 1000 yards
- Using a bow or firearm that is not properly sighted in

## Shot placement

Shot placement is crucial when trying to harvest an animal. As ethical sportsmen and women, we should strive to only take good shots and make the most humane kill. This can be achieved by only shooting when you are 100% confident in the shot. Part of being confident is practicing with your hunting equipment before the hunt. Another way to be confident would be to know exactly where to put the shot. Also be sure to note if there are any obstructions between you and the deer when shooting. A branch or twig can significantly impact a projectile's trajectory. Below are the shots that may present themselves when you are in the field. The dots on the pictures show where the shot will be most effective. When taking the following shots from a tree stand, remember to aim slightly higher on the animal than indicated due to the angle that the projectile will take.

### Broadside

This is by far the best shot that you can have. Since the vital organs are easier to hit with this shot, most inexperienced hunters should wait until this shot presents itself. The projectile will most likely go through both lungs and possibly the heart when taking this shot.



*Photo by WDFW*



## Quartering away

This shot is also fairly effective for harvesting but can be a challenge for some hunters. The object of this shot is to hit the tail end of the lung that is towards you and the middle or front of the lung that is away from you. Aim for the opposite shoulder of the animal.

Photo by Susan Jensen

## Quartering to

This shot is getting more difficult because there are more bone areas that can be hit. Archers probably should not take this shot as the probability of hitting a rib or shoulder is increased. Also the animal may see you draw and release and “jump the string.” This refers to when the animal moves when the bowstring is released and can change the point of impact of your arrow. Muzzleloader and rifle hunters may not have an issue since the bullet should go through bone.



Photo by Antony Sirgedas



## Head on

This shot shouldn't generally be taken. The chance of hitting vital organs is considerably less than the above three shots. The only really viable shot would be a heart shot. However, a shot from this angle would also most likely rupture the intestines, stomachs, and other areas of the deer that have digestive juices or worse. Archers should not take the shot because the sternum will most likely deflect the arrow.

Photo by WDFW

## Rear end

This shot shouldn't be taken. The chance of hitting vital organs is considerably less than broadside, quartering to, and quartering away shots. A shot from this angle would also most likely rupture the intestines, stomachs, and other areas of the deer that have digestive juices or worse.



Photo by Laura Rogers

## Tracking

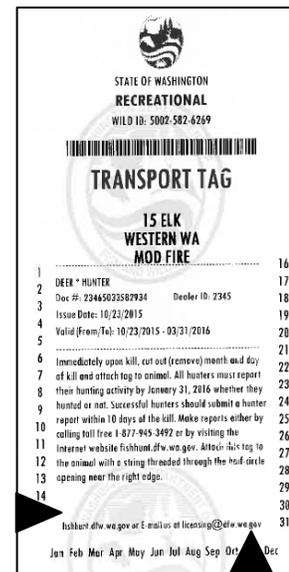
This is probably the most difficult skill to learn on the fly. However it is a necessary skill to be successful in retrieving big game animals. At some point, every big game hunter has an animal hit well but run off into the brush and they lose sight of the animal. You will have to be able to follow a blood trail to find your big game animal. Give the animal about 30 minutes after the shot to lie down and expire. Watch and listen for any indications the animal may be down. Go to the spot where the animal was standing at the time of impact. If there are two hunters, have one stay at the spot that you shot from and have the other go to the spot of impact. Look

for any blood or hair in the immediate area. Once you find some blood, examine it to see what kind of hit the animal took. If you are an archer, look at the arrow to help determine what kind of hit it was. Bubbly blood means a shot to the lungs. Dark red blood means a heart shot. Black blood means a liver shot.

Slowly make your way towards the last place you saw the deer running but keep your eyes on the ground sweeping left to right looking for blood. If you cannot find any, you can walk in slow circles until you find some blood. There are lighted tools that will make the blood stand out better, but they will only work at night. Mark the spot of last blood or have one hunter stay there and make a slow circle at about 10 feet. If you cannot find blood at 10 feet, adjust your distance. Remember that this is SLOW and METHODICAL tracking. Continue on until you find the animal. If while you are tracking you hear the animal gets up and run off again, wait another 30 minutes before starting to track the animal again. When you find the animal, approach it from behind and make sure to poke it with a stick or your hunting equipment to verify it has expired. If not, dispatch the animal as humanely as possible.

## Tagging

When you do retrieve your animal, you will want to make sure to notch and affix your transport tag to it. Immediately after any big game animal has been killed, the appropriate tag of the person who has taken the animal must be validated by cutting out and completely removing the month and day of kill. The month and day must be completely removed. A slit is not acceptable. Then the tag must be securely attached to the carcass in a visible manner. A favorite way to attach the tag is with electrical tape on the antler. However the Washington tags have little holes in the right hand side of the tag. This is a good spot to stick a zip tie through and attach to an antler or an ear.



## Field Dressing

Field dressing is removing the internal organs from the animal. This should be done as soon as practical after the animal is recovered. Doing this sooner decreases the chances that the intestines, stomachs, and other areas of the deer that have digestive juices or worse may rupture and come in contact with the meat. There are many valid ways in which to field dress deer. Below you will find a prescribed way to field dress. For other ways to field dress deer, search for deer field dressing videos online.

- Roll the deer onto its back.
- Find the bottom of the ribcage.
- Insert your knife just below the bottom of the ribcage angled towards the head.
- Cut up the sternum towards the head, splitting the breastbone to the base of the neck.
- Return to the bottom of the ribcage.

- Place the knife in-between your index and middle fingers while keeping the blade tip covered
- Slowly cut down the belly to the base of the anus.
  - You can also use a knife with a Gut hook if you have one.
  - Make sure to leave proof of sex naturally attached to the carcass.
- Cut around the anus and pull it out slightly.
- Tie the anus in a knot or use some string around the exposed lower intestine to make sure no droppings get on your meat.
- Cut into the meat to expose the pelvis.
- Using a bone saw or sharp hatchet, carefully split the pelvis where the lower intestine goes through the bone.
- Move back up to the neck area.
- Sever the windpipe as high as you can.
- Tie this into a knot or close it with string.
- If you want to keep and eat the heart, move down to the chest cavity and remove it.
  - The heart and liver are eaten by some hunters. Place these organs into a game bag to keep them clean and cool.
- Slowly cut the diaphragm that separated the heart and lungs from the intestines and stomach making sure not to puncture any organs.
- Move along the spine and detach the innards as close to the backbone as possible.
- Gently pull the lower intestines out from between the split bone.
- If you want to keep the liver, collect it from the entrails now.
- Once all connections are severed, roll the animal on to its side and slide the entrails out.

## Skinning

Skinning the animal will help cool the meat faster. You can decide to skin the animal on the ground, or you can hang it and skin it while it is hanging. You can purchase a gambrel and pulley to hoist the animal up but you do not have to.

- Make small vertical cuts in the hind legs just below the ankle area inside the ligament that controls the lower leg.
- Put your gambrel hooks through those cuts.
- Hoist the animal up.
- Make a cut in the skin but not into the meat around the hind leg just below the point the deer is hanging. Go slow and make sure not to cut that tendon.
- Make a cut from the previous step to the pelvis area where the meat is exposed.
- Make little cuts along this line to create a flap you can hang on to.
- Pull the skin away from the meat and cut the connective tissue. Try not to cut into the meat.
- Once you have skinned the entire leg, repeat the previous four steps for the second hind leg.
- If you are skinning at home you can now cut the tail off.

- Pull down on the skin to help separate it from the meat.
- While holding downward pressure, cut the connective tissue sometimes referred to as silver skin. Just run the knife along the edge where the meat and skin meet as you pull.
  - If you are going to want the skin tanned, try not to nick the hide.
- Start working around the carcass and making the cuts as needed.
- Once you get to the front legs, cut around the knee joint.
  - There is very little meat in the lower leg.
- Once you have severed the tendons, if you bend the leg to the side it becomes easier to remove.
- Do this on the other leg as well.
- Now that the legs are off, continue skinning down the legs and onto the neck.
- Skin down to about 4 inches from the skull.
- Use your bone saw to cut through the spine just above where the skin is still attached to the carcass.
  - A hack saw could also be used but make sure it is a clean blade.
- At this point you can process the carcass yourself or you can check with a local butcher shop that may be able to process game animals for a fee.

## Processing

Processing the carcass is the final step before you can enjoy some of the deliciousness that waits. To process the carcass, you can break it down yourself or you can take it to local butcher shop that processes game animals. There is a fee to have the carcass processed by the butcher shop, but it is cut just like beef.

If you process it yourself, you may not get the beautiful steaks and roasts that come out of a butcher shop. Videos of how to process deer can be found on you tube or can be purchased at local sporting goods stores and online stores. However, if you do choose to process yourself, remember that the meat has to be protected from the freezer and freezer burn. A vacuum sealer is a great way to make your game last for many months to come.

## Hunter Reporting

Hunter reporting is an integral part of hunting any animal that requires a tag. It allows WDFW staff to accurately measure the harvest and coupled with winter surveys of the animal species will help with setting the next year seasons. Since the information is necessary for WDFW to effectively manage the game animals, this is a mandatory report even if you did not hunt or harvest. If you fail to report by the deadline of January 31 then you will be subject to a \$10 administrative penalty.

Below is a step by step process to report your tags. If you have trouble with the online system, you can also call 877-945-3492 and report by phone.

- Go to [fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov](http://fishhunt.dfw.wa.gov)

- Under the “I want to Submit” section on the left hand side (Highlighted in Orange), Select “Hunter Report”.
- Select the “Submit Report” Box in the top left hand corner of the page.
- Enter all customer information fields. Then click “GO”.
- If an error occurs, “customer not found, please try your search again.” Verify the information that was entered.
- Select the first species under the “Choose a tag to report on:” section.
- Answer all questions that are on the screen. The questions will change based on the answers provided.
- When completed, the report will issue a message that says, “You have finished the hunter report. Click FINISH to save all of your answers. Click “FINISH” when completed.
- A confirmation page will come up that will show the report has been submitted successfully.
- Write down the submittal date and the confirmation number, this information may need to be referenced at a future date.
- When completed use the Back button on the screen and it will take you back to the page that shows which tags need to be reported on or have been reported.
- Repeat the process for all tags with an outstanding report.
- This information is used to set future hunting seasons in conjunction with WDFW field staff population surveys.



## **Ten Basic Safety Rules**

1. Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and under control.
2. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire. Use your safety, but remember that safeties sometimes fail.
4. Be sure of your target and what lies beyond before firing.
5. Never place or carry a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle.
6. Never use a firearm unless you are familiar with how it works. If you need an owner's manual, write to the manufacturer.
7. Never cross a fence, climb a tree, cross a stream or jump a ditch with a loaded firearm.
8. Never point at anything you do not want to shoot.
9. Unload firearms when not in use. Store firearms and ammunition separately.
10. Never use alcohol (or drugs) before or during shooting.

## Learn More about WDFW's Hunter Education Program

### Website

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/huntered/>

### Email

[huntered@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:huntered@dfw.wa.gov)

### Regional Offices

Region 1 Spokane Office: (509) 892-1001  
Region 2 Ephrata Office: (509) 754-4624  
Region 3 Yakima Office: (509) 575-2740  
Region 4 Mill Creek Office: (425) 775-1311  
Region 5 Vancouver Office: (360) 696-6211  
Region 6 Montesano Office: (360) 239-4628  
Headquarters Olympia Office: (360) 902-8111

### More Information

For more information about the Hunter Education Program, contact our staff in Olympia at (360) 902-8111.

### Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Headquarters

1111 Washington St SE

Olympia WA 98501

[wdfw.wa.gov](http://wdfw.wa.gov)

*The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) receives federal assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and provides equal access to its programs, services, activities, and facilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968.*

*The U.S. Department of the Interior and WDFW prohibit discrimination on the bases of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, mental or physical disability, reprisal, sexual orientation, status as a parent, and genetic information. If you believe you have been discriminated against, please contact the WDFW ADA Program Manager, PO Box 43139, Olympia, WA 98504 within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident before filing a formal complaint, or write to: Chief, Public Civil Rights Division, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington DC 20240.*

*If you need further assistance or information, please contact the Olympia office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: (360) 902-2349, or Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), (360) 902-2207.*