MICHIGAN SPORTSMEN AGAINST HUNGER AFFILIATED PROCESSOR GUIDELINES MANUAL 2026-2027

UPDATED INFORMATION PLEASE READ COMPLETELY

HELPING MICHIGAN'S FAMILIES IN NEED

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The Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger program is a 501(c3) organization, ALL fund donations are tax deductible.

These guidelines are for the operational year that runs from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027. Provisions have been established for deer harvested under special permits, management programs, Crop Damage control, etc. Processors need to ensure best practices are followed during all phases of handling donated deer and, that they and their staff are in compliance with all health and safety standards. Included in this manual is a review of the deer donations, processing, and reimbursement processes. To become a participating processor, download this manual/guideline and complete appendix - A and appendix - B found at the end of this manual. Return the completed appendixes to **processor.coordinator@sportsmenagainsthunger.**org for review and approval. This manual serves as a general guide, changes may need to be implemented, if so, notification will be provided to participating processors.

This manual was developed utilizing the following reference sources.

- Feeding America "*Wild Game Donation Guidelines for Food Banks*" (July 9, 2020). To view this document, click here.
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, "*What you need to know about lead in venison for food service providers*". To view this document click here.
- Michigan Department of Agriculture, "*Venison Processing in Retail Grocery Stores"*, (revised. 05/12/2022). To view this document, click here.
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development "*Venison Processing, Processing Guide and Sanitation Requirements for Retail Food Establishments*" (revised. 12/2018). To view this document, click here.

Facility Requirements

a) Participating processing facilities must comply with the minimum sanitation requirement set by the agency that holds their license/certification.
b) Processor or the owner of the processing facility must complete appendix - A. By checking the boxes and signing the checklist confirms you comply with these requirements which were adopted from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development sanitation requirements for processing wild game.

Food Safety & Processing

a.) All processed venison packaging will have identification that it is venison or wild game not for resale and the date processed.
b.) Donated venison is to be ground and packaged in 1 to 5 lb. packages.
c.) Processors should not accept Road Salvage Deer or donations of game meat that was not processed at their facility or has been pre-processed by others.
d.) Dear carcasses showing signs of spoilage or are unable to be made safe for human consumption must be rejected.

Lead in Venison and Processing of Carcasses

You can take steps to keep lead contamination in venison to a minimum by following a few guidelines:

a) Use care when selecting meat for grinding.
b) Do not use deer with excessive shot damage.
c) Trim a generous distance away from the bullet wound channel and discard any meat that is bruised, discolored, or contains hair, dirt, bone fragments, or debris.

Refer to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development informational brochure by clicking here.

Venison Donations

When donating whole deer, harvested with tags that are available for purchase by the public through the Michigan DNR license system, the person donating the deer does not pay for the processing of the donated deer to Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger. They may keep the antlers, cape, or entire hide for mounting from the donated deer. Make sure to ask the donor before processing what they want for mounting.

There are two ways in which someone can help Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger:

a) Donating the entire deer to the program. There are no charges to the donor.
b) If someone wants to make a cash donation to Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger, refer them to our website sportsmenagainsthunger.org/support/make-a-donation/

- Please DO NOT accept donations on behalf of Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger**.**

Processing Reimbursement

Once a processor is recognized as participating in the Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger program, they will be listed on our website and recognized on our reimbursement page. All processing reimbursement requests are made electronically through this website page.

Reimbursement Rates

a) The processors' reimbursement rate for deer harvested by licensed hunters using standard retail hunting licenses is $90.00 per deer.
b) Processor reimbursement for deer taken under crop damage permits is $3.00 for each pound of finished ground venison, or $90 per deer, whichever is the lesser amount. The holder of the crop damage permit or other individuals or organizations must agree to equally share this reimbursement fee with Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger.
c) MSAH may choose to support organized deer culls, disease control permits, or herd management harvests. Pre-authorization is required. Contact MSAH a minimum of 45 days in advance of these types of harvests to confirm payment arrangements.

Online Reimbursement Form

To be reimbursed for processing donated deer, you will need to complete the online reimbursement form available at sportsmenagainsthunger.org/reimbursement

Submitting your reimbursement requests electronically helps us accurately track donations, process payments in a timely fashion, and ensure donated venison reaches local food pantries and families in need.

Your reimbursement requests cannot be submitted unless the information in all required fields is completed. Only one charitable organization can be listed per reimbursement request.

a) Begin by entering the email address where confirmation of the submission is to be sent.
b) Select your facility from the drop-down menu.
c) Pounds of ground venison being provided to the charitable organization.
d) Number of deer processed for reimbursement
e) Total reimbursement *($3.00 per pound, $90 per deer or, pre-agreed-upon amount)*
f) Name of the charitable organization receiving the venison.
g) The first and last name of the person picking up the venison.
h) Phone number for the person who picked up the venison.
i) Email Address for Pickup Contact.
j) Date the charitable organization received the venison.
k) Click the submit button.

*One request is required for each receiving organization.

Reimbursement requests must be submitted on the MSAH website sportsmenagainsthunger.org/reimbursement/ within 45 days of venison pickup date.

Optional Reimbursement Request

Processors may wish to donate some or all of their deer processing services to the MSAH. In other situations, processors are working in conjunction with other reimbursement systems. If so:

a) In the "*Processor Information Notes / Comments*" section, indicate that all or part of this reimbursement request is a donation.
b) Please indicate your donation in the "*Services you are donating to MSAH*" section of the request form.
c) Complete the required sections of the reimbursement form as normal and submit the form.
d) The process coordinator will contact you to confirm your donation.

Once submitted, your request is entered into our system and included in the next scheduled monthly payment cycle. Please contact **processor.coordinator@sportsmenagainsthunger.org** with any questions.

Thank You

Without YOUR support and generosity many families throughout Michigan would not be able to put a meal on their table. It has even been estimated that people are missing as many as 7 meals a week in your community and across Michigan. Everyone in Michigan should have access to good, healthy food every day. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Michigan Sportsman Against Hunger at sportsmenagainsthunger.org/about/contact/

Appendix-A
Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger
Sanitation Requirements for Processing Venison

USE APPROVED WATER SYSTEM

☐ Verify water supply is from a safe approved source

EMPLOYEE REQUIREMENTS

☐ Prevent employees who are diagnosed with or having symptoms of an illness, wound or other affliction which might contaminate the product.

PRODUCT EQUIPMENT AND UTENSIL FOOD CONTACT SURFACE

☐ Check the condition of all food contact surfaces before and after processing venison, including cutting boards, knives, grinder, gloves, and outer garments.
☐ Schedule routine cleaning and sanitizing of all food contact surfaces before and after processing venison.
☐ Conduct routine cleaning and sanitizing every four hours unless the processing room is refrigerated.

PREVENT CROSS CONTAMINATION

☐ Separate raw and ready-to-eat foods, and prevent overcrowding in freezers, coolers, processing, and storage areas.
☐ Implement safe handling procedures from the time the venison enters the store through processing and sales, to prevent cross-contamination.

HAND WASHING FACILITIES

☐ Provide hand washing sinks in both the processing and restroom areas.
☐ Supply hand washing sinks with hand soap and paper towels.
☐ Keep restrooms clean and in good repair.

CHECKLIST FOR PROCESSING VENISON

☐ Check that only animals taken wild are being received for processing.

Accept only carcasses which are:

☐ Free of signs of illness such as unhealthy body condition (starved appearance or visible infections).
☐ Free of lumps or nodules in the chest cavity. For additional information on Bovine Tuberculosis & CWD Regulations Click here.
☐ Field dressed with hide intact.
☐ Free of visible decomposition or contamination.
☐ Identified with owner's name and proper DNR tag.

CARCASS STORAGE

☐ Carcasses with hides should be stored at 41°*f* or less and in a secure manner.
☐ Carcass handling and processing should be conducted using "first in/first out" rotation.

HEAD & HIDE REMOVAL

- ☐ Minimize handling and cutting of brain or spinal tissues and lymph nodes:
- ☐ Use a designated saw to remove antlers.
- ☐ Do not cut through spinal column except to remove head. Use a knife designated for that purpose that is maintained in a sanitary condition.
- ☐ Head and hide removal must take place in a dedicated area. It must be strictly segregated from food storage and handling such as outside or in a specialized room.
- ☐ Storage for all non-edible portions (hides, legs, heads) should not be inside the facility. A secured, separate area that does not attract pests should be used.
- ☐ Dispose of carcass parts in approved landfill. For more information on disposal click here.

CARCASS PROCESSING

- ☐ Wear intact rubber or disposable gloves in good repair. Promptly wash off any deer blood and saliva that comes in direct contact with your skin.
- ☐ Processing of hunter-owned deer must take place after all commercial food handling has ceased. There must be no way to cross contaminate other food.
- ☐ All processing and handling equipment, food contact surfaces, and floors in the shared food handling areas must be washed and sanitized immediately after processing. Processing of commercial foods cannot take place until this is done.
- ☐ Remove bone, fat and connective tissue from deer meat. This will also remove lymph nodes
- ☐ Outer garments and aprons must be changed, washed, and sanitized after processing venison.

Venison Product Storage

- ☐ Processors must implement procedures to maintain the identity of Venison products so as not to confuse them with commercial meat.
- ☐ Processed hunter-owned venison should be wrapped and each package identified with the name of the owner. Packages should be stamped, "Not for Sale."
- ☐ Venison held for further processing (jerky, sausage, etc.) should be stored in covered containers, separated from commercial foods by a physical barrier and properly identified.

As an approved deer processor location for Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger, I have reviewed and understand the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development "*Processing Guide and Sanitation Requirements for Retail Food Establishments*" (rev. 12/2018) and agree to follow those guidelines. To access this guide, click here.

Processor business name	Business owners name	Business owners' signature *Typing my name in this space services as my signature.* Date:

Appendix-B

MICHIGAN SPORTSMEN AGAINST HUNGER PROCESSOR INFORMATION

Please fill out the information below. This will assist us in keeping our records up to date and the ability to contact you when there any changes to our program. *~Thank you~*

Business Name:			
Business Address:	City:	State:	Zip:
Mailing address:	City:	State:	Zip:
Contact Person:			
Primary Phone Number:	Secondary phone number:		
Email:	Website:		

Please provide us with the following information:

1.) Have you ever collected from MSAH before? ☐Yes or ☐No
If **yes,** beginning what year: _____

2.) Your license number/processing number/custom exempt number: _____

3.) Are you insured? ☐Yes or ☐No If **yes** who is your carrier: _____

4) Is your business inspected? ☐Yes or ☐No If **yes** by who: _____

5) How do you package your ground venison?

☐Double wrapped butcher paper ☐Vacuum pack ☐Freezer game bag chubs ☐Other

If you are currently providing a local pantry with ground venison donations, please let us know their name/address/phone number. If you are not working with someone right now leave this blank.

1)
2)
3)
4)

Contact our Process Coordinator at processor.coordinator@sportsmenagainsthunger.org if you have questions.

Thank you for your time, your efforts, and your commitment to help with the fight against hunger in our communities.