

# Hunt wisely

A guidebook for hunting safely and responsibly in Yukon



## Includes:

- Hunter ethics
- Essential gear
- Firearm safety
- Hunting tips for big game species
- How to field dress an animal
- How wildlife management works in Yukon

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On the cover: Hunter education instructor Maya Poirier leads horses back after a hunt. Photo by Sam Richardson.

Vital target area illustrations of pages 14 to 26 adapted from *The Perfect Shot, North America: Shot Placement for North American Big Game* by Craig Boddington (Safari Press, 2002).

# Hunt wisely

Hunting plays a large role in the lives of many Yukoners and has been an integral part of culture and sustenance for the Indigenous peoples of Yukon for thousands of years. Hunting can take up a significant amount of time, thought and resources. From the first steps of planning a hunting trip, to heading out on the land, to processing, transporting, using and sharing the animal, hunting is a major commitment.

This book will give you some of the knowledge and tools you'll need to make your time hunting a safe and fruitful one. Here you'll find important parts of hunting not covered by the rules and regulations, including:

- how to get ready for the hunt;
- tips for caring for your equipment;
- how to act while hunting;
- instructions on field dressing an animal; and
- other topics.

## Be prepared

The best advice for hunting is to be prepared! As a hunter, you have the ethical and legal responsibility to use your firearms safely and kill an animal cleanly. You must also take all the edible meat after harvesting an animal and care for that meat when you bring it home.

Be ready for emergency situations, not just for harvesting an animal. This means carrying proper safety equipment and being able to camp overnight in the field.

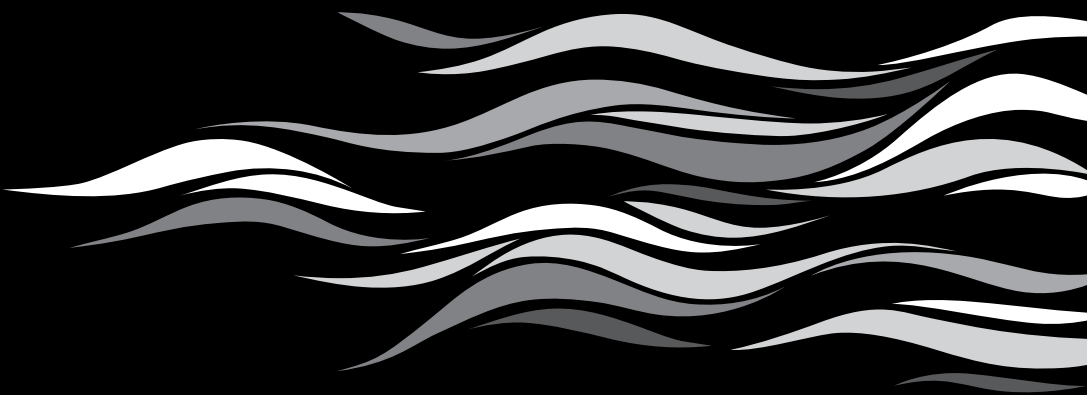
If you know what to expect, are physically and mentally prepared, and have the proper equipment, you'll have a better hunting experience.

## Don't forget: review the hunting regulations

New regulations come into effect every year. Pick up a copy of the latest **Yukon hunting regulations summary** from a Department of Environment office or download it from [Yukon.ca/hunting](http://Yukon.ca/hunting). It's updated annually with information on licences, seals, bag limits and rules.



*Grouse in a tree.*



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## The ethical hunter

Part of being a hunter is a responsibility to make sure future populations of wildlife will exist, and that future hunters will have opportunities to continue to hunt wildlife sustainably. If we want to preserve healthy wildlife populations, we have to set a good example for others.

Being an ethical hunter means treating wildlife, other people, the land and wildlife management rules with respect.

### Hunter education

Yukon residents born after April 1, 1987, need to take a hunter education course before they can get a big game hunting licence. This free course covers the principles of ethical hunting. Go to [Yukon.ca/hunter-education](http://Yukon.ca/hunter-education) to learn more about the Yukon Hunter Education and Ethics Development (HEED) course and how you can sign up.

### Basics of hunter ethics

#### Respect yourself

- Prepare yourself before the hunt: take the right equipment, train in outdoor survival and learn wilderness first aid.
- Don't use drugs or alcohol when hunting or using a firearm.

#### Respect all wildlife

- Kill animals quickly and cleanly.
- Kill only what you need, use all that you take.
- If you wound an animal, make every effort to kill it.
- If you kill an animal, make every effort to retrieve it.
- Practise proper field dressing techniques. Don't allow meat to get dirty or to spoil.
- Wasting meat from a game bird, small game animal and most big game animals is against the law. Wasting meat means leaving it out in the field to be scavenged or spoiled, feeding it to pets, destroying freezer-burned meat, throwing out meat to clear up space in your freezer, or using meat as bait.

- Keep a clean camp and pack out your garbage. If wildlife begins associating food and garbage with people, they can start causing problems and may need to be killed.

## Respect others

- If you see someone else hunting in an area, choose a different spot.
- To hunt within one kilometre of a residence, you need permission (written or verbal) from the occupants. If occupants are not home to provide permission, you may not hunt within one kilometre of that residence.
- Respect Yukon First Nations Final Agreements by getting written permission in advance to hunt:
  - any big or small game species on Category A Settlement Lands; and
  - elk and wood bison on Category B Settlement Lands.
- Many cabins in the backcountry belong to licensed trappers who use them in the winter. Don't disturb these cabins, or any traps and equipment you find in the backcountry.
- Avoid using trails marked with "active trapping area" signs or trails with traps during the trapping season (October 1 to March 31).
- Don't field dress wildlife in campgrounds. Your activities can attract dangerous wildlife to the area and this affects the safety and experience of other campers.
- Don't leave gut piles near private residences, settlements, hiking trails, campgrounds, roads and other areas frequently used by people. Gut piles left on roadways will attract scavengers and in winter, frozen gut piles can pose a danger to vehicles.
- When hunting in Yukon, you're always in Indigenous traditional territory. Find out about the customs and laws of the local First Nation or other Indigenous group and show respect for their traditions.



## Respect the land

- Use existing trails and campsites. Practise “leave no trace” rules and try to leave areas the same or better than you found them.
- Don't make new trails. If using off-road vehicles, practice “tread lightly” principles to avoid damaging the landscape and local wildlife habitat.
- Only use a snowmobile if there's enough snow that you won't damage the ground beneath it.

## Respect the law

- Follow the rules and regulations. Follow the laws of the First Nation as well if you are on Settlement Land. If you are hunting, fishing or trapping for subsistence, follow any laws your First Nation or other Indigenous group may have in place.
- Cooperate when you're approached by conservation or RCMP officers.
- If you accidentally kill an animal you're not allowed to hunt, report it right away to a conservation officer.
- If you see someone breaking the law, call the Turn in Poachers and Polluters (TIPP) line at 1-800-661-0525.



*Hunter education instructor Jim Welsh on a wood bison hunt.*





## Essential gear

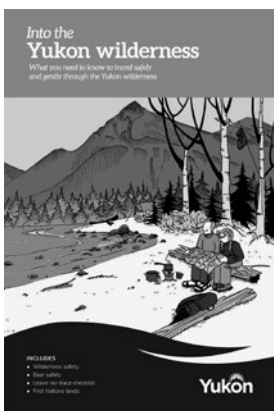
Hunting can be rewarding, but you can encounter all sorts of hardships out in the field. You can lower the chance for mishaps by taking the right equipment with you.

Likewise, field dressing a big game animal and packing it out can be a difficult task, but the right tools mean you will get more meat to your freezer before it has a chance to spoil.

Use the lists below for the basics and add anything else you find useful.

Before heading out, ask yourself:

- Does someone know where I am going and when I am coming back?
- Am I prepared for the worst possible weather conditions and emergencies?
- Do I have my licence, seal(s) and Yukon hunting regulations summary booklet?
- Is my vehicle in good condition?



### Yukon is wild

If you aren't experienced with wilderness travel, or just need a refresher, read our free introduction: *Into the Yukon wilderness*. You can download it from [Yukon.ca/yukon-wilderness](http://Yukon.ca/yukon-wilderness) or get a copy from Department of Environment offices and Visitor Information Centres.

# Basic hunting checklist

## Personal gear

### Year-round

- Bear spray / bangers
- Multi-tool / knife
- Synthetic inner and undergarments
- Wool / synthetic socks
- Wool / synthetic shirts and pants; wear layers so you can easily remove or put on clothes when conditions change
- Warm hat / toque
- Ball cap
- Sunglasses
- Head lamp
- Firearm (sighted-in)
- Quality ammunition
- Basic gun cleaning kit
- Range finder
- Topographic maps / compass / GPS
- Sleeping bag and pad
- Tent / camper
- Binoculars
- Spotting scope
- Food / high-energy snacks
- Water bottle

- Water purification
- Thermos
- Personal medication
- First aid kit

### Summer and fall

- Breathable rain gear
- Waterproof boots
- Gloves
- Bug spray / sunscreen

### Winter and spring

- Winter parka
- Winter boots
- Mitts
- Snow pants
- Hunter orange overalls / coveralls / vest / toque
- Snowshoes / skis

## Basic personal survival kit (on your body)

- Two fire starters: lighter and strike anywhere matches in a waterproof container
- Signal device / whistle / flares
- Shelter building material (plastic / tarps / garbage bags / emergency blanket or bag)

## Field dressing kit

- 2 tarps (new)
- Rope (15 to 30 metres / 50 to 100 feet)
- 2 field dressing knives
- Stone / steel sharpener
- Jute / string / cord
- Axe – 24 in
- Block and tackle / come along (hand-powered winch)
- Unscented handy wipes
- Hip waders / chest waders
- Camp / multi-use knife
- Small saw / meat saw
- Re-sealable plastic bags
- Rubber or cotton gloves
- Camera
- Cheese cloth
- Flagging tape
- Good pack board or ruck sack

## Other suggestions

### Year-round

- Chain saw
- Shovel
- Extra tarps
- Lantern
- Satellite phone / inReach / SPOT personal tracker
- Vehicle safety kit(s): belts, spark plugs, fluids, winch, jack, spare tires, power box and/or jumper cables, portable compressor, tools

### Fall

- Canoe / boat
- Waders
- Fishing gear

### Winter

- Snowmobile / skimmer
- Extra tarps
- Tire chains
- Tiger torch or other heat source
- Rubber or cotton gloves



# Firearms

## Licensing

Any hunter 18 and older who possesses or uses a firearm has to pass the Canadian Firearms Safety Course and obtain a Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL). You need this licence to get or own a gun and to get ammunition.

Firearm users aged 12 to 17 must pass the Canadian Firearms Safety Course and obtain a Minor's Possession and Acquisition Licence.

Some adaptations to these rules have been made for Indigenous peoples.

You don't need a PAL to borrow a firearm as long as you are under the direct supervision of a licensed adult who is 18 or older.

For more information on federal firearm laws that apply to firearm owners and users in Canada, call the Canadian Firearms Program at 1-800-731-4000 or visit [rcmp-grc.gc.ca/firearms](http://rcmp-grc.gc.ca/firearms).

## Choosing the right firearm

Firearm and ammunition restrictions apply to some big game animals, small game animals, game birds and migratory birds. Check the current *Yukon hunting regulations summary* so you can choose the right firearm and ammunition for the species you want to hunt.

## Ammunition

Use **premium quality ammunition** that possesses bullet characteristics designed for the type of wildlife you hunt. Standard ammunition may not kill an animal as quickly or humanely as premium quality ammunition, such as all-copper, partition and bonded bullets. Lighter-weight bullets will also decrease the severity of the wound if you miss your target area.

Consider using non-toxic premium ammunition to reduce bullet fragmentation and decrease your risk of accidentally eating lead fragments.

## Practise makes perfect

Understanding the limitations of your firearm and your skills using the firearm is important to being an ethical hunter. Practise shooting your firearm from different firing positions and at different distances from the target to become confident and

competent. Use standard ammunition for target practice. Practise is the best way to improve your ability to make a clean kill.

## Sighting

Sight your firearm with the ammunition you intend to use before you hunt. You'll need to adjust your sights or scope to get the best accuracy. Different ammunition has different effects on the path of the shot.

## Taking the shot

Try to kill the animal in the quickest and most humane manner to prevent wounding it. **Your first shot is the most important one.**

- Use a rest, support or shooting stick whenever practical to steady your rifle.
- Shooting from a sitting or kneeling position will improve your accuracy – it's easier to keep your firearm steady that way.
- Aim for the **vital target area** of the animal (see the big game species profiles on pages 14 to 27 for specific illustrations). This is usually located behind the front shoulder in a big game animal. It contains the heart, lungs and liver. A well-placed shot in this area is the most effective means of killing an animal.
- Avoid head and neck shots. They are hard to make and often result in prolonged suffering from a serious wound, especially if you can't find the animal after shooting it.
- Don't shoot into groups of animals. Wait for one to separate from the group. Shooting into groups makes it easy to wound animals other than your target. It's also harder to identify a wounded animal and kill it if it's caught within a group that's also startled from the sound of the shot.



*Target practice.*



*You can improve your accuracy when you shoot from a kneeling position.*

## Firearm safety

Firearms are useful, but can kill or injure you or your companions if used unsafely. Practising firearm safety is absolutely necessary.

These are the vital four ACTS of firearm safety:

- **A**ssume every firearm is loaded.
- **C**ontrol the muzzle direction at all times.
- **T**rigger finger off and outside the trigger guard.
- **S**ee that the firearm is unloaded when you are no longer using it. **PROVE** it safe.

What it means to **PROVE** it safe:

1. **P**oint your firearm in a safe direction.
2. **R**emove all the ammunition.
3. **O**bserve the chamber. Make sure it's empty.
4. **V**erify the feeding path. Check that the path between the magazine and the chamber is clear and that the magazine is empty.
5. **E**xamine the bore. Deal with any obstructions you see immediately.

Keep the following in mind.

- It's against the law to carry a loaded firearm in or on a vehicle. Vehicles include cars, trucks and snowmobiles. Always unload your firearm before putting it in or on your vehicle. However, you are allowed to carry a loaded firearm in a boat.
- Don't chamber a round until you're sure that you'll take a shot. Confirm that there isn't a bullet in the chamber when you're just carrying your firearm. Firearms can go off when you don't mean them to.
- Check for snow or mud in the barrel if you have fallen, bent over, or climbed over a rough patch while holding your firearm.
- It's against the law to hunt with an unsafe firearm – always **PROVE** it safe.
- Don't shoot when it's dark. It's against the law to hunt between one hour after sunset and one hour before sunrise.



## Safe hunting

- Before your hunting trip, tell friends or family your travel route, who is with you and when you will return. Then they can alert the authorities if you don't come back in time. You can find an online trip planner at [plan.AdventureSmart.ca](http://plan.AdventureSmart.ca).
- Find a hunting partner or group. It's better if someone can go for help if one of you faces an emergency. Make sure all the hunters in your group know the basics of wilderness first aid.
- One risk when you're hunting is other hunters! Wear bright clothing to distinguish yourself from the environment around you. You want others to recognize you from a distance. Orange blazes will make you stand out.
- Lining up your shot takes a lot of focus. Don't forget to check if there are other people in the area and that no one is behind the animal you intend to shoot.
- If night is approaching, take into account how much time it will take to prepare and pack out the animal before you choose to shoot. You do not want to rush these important steps and attempting to field dress an animal in cold and dark conditions can lead to other problems. For example, you could have to leave part of your kill unattended in the field overnight or you might be unable to find your way back to your campsite safely.



*Heading out on a school wood bison hunt, March 2020.*



## Bear safety

The presence of meat and carcasses can increase the risk of bear encounters.

### Don't surprise a bear

- Choose travel routes with good visibility where possible.
- Stay alert and look ahead for bears.
- Approach thickets from upwind if you can.
- Make noise to let bears know you're coming.
- Travel in groups.
- Avoid travelling at night.
- Choose a campsite well away from wildlife and human trails.

### Don't attract a bear

- Never feed a bear.
- Don't bring greasy, smelly foods such as bacon or canned fish.
- Pack your food in airtight containers such as bear-proof bins, specialized bags or hard plastic boxes.
- Thoroughly burn your garbage or pack it out in airtight containers.



*Grizzly bear.*

- At night, store food, garbage and meat away from your tent, preferably 75 metres downwind and in an area that isn't accessible to a bear.
- Use portable electric fencing around your camp.

### At the kill site

- Stay alert while field dressing your animal. Look around and listen.
- Keep bear spray or bear bangers, and your firearm, within easy reach.
- Take all the meat out in one trip if possible. If not, return to the site as quickly as possible.



- Separate the meat pile from the gut pile if you have to leave the site.
- Leave your odour on or near the meat pile by urinating around it or leaving a piece of clothing on it.
- Use portable electric fencing around your kill while you field dress or if you have to leave the animal unattended.
- Mark the kill site with lots of tied surveyor's tape. This helps you find the site again and the tape flaps in the breeze, making noise.
- Remove the tape when you no longer need to return to the site.

## Returning to the kill site

- Carry at least one firearm in your group when returning to the site.
- Approach the site from higher ground, if possible, to give yourself a long-distance view.
- Make noise as you approach the site.
- Approach from upwind if possible.

If a bear is present, noise, gunshots or bear bangers may scare it away. It's against the law to shoot a bear to protect your meat.

## If you encounter a bear

- Group together if there are other people present.
- Speak calmly but firmly to the bear.
- If the bear is stationary, back away slowly, but **don't run**. Leave the area.
- If the bear stays focused on you and keeps coming as you back away, try standing your ground, raising your arms and calling out in a calm voice.
- Shoot the bear only in defense of life and report the kill to a conservation officer as soon as possible.

## More information

Pick up a copy of **How you can stay safe in bear country** from a Department of Environment office or a Visitor Information Centre, or download it from [Yukon.ca/stay-safe-bear-country](http://Yukon.ca/stay-safe-bear-country).

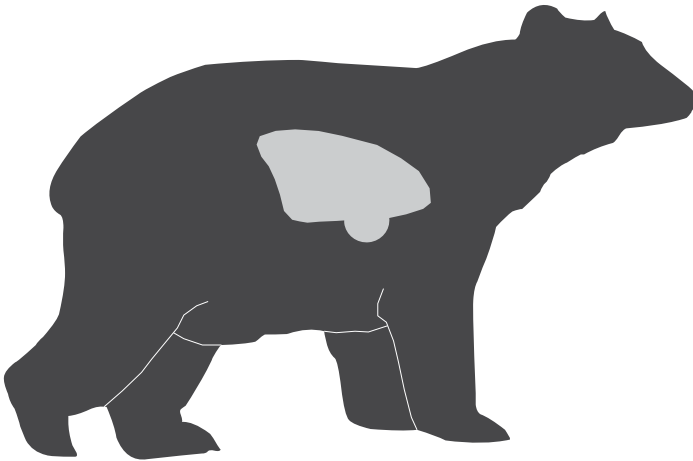




## Big game species profiles

### Black bear

Vital target area



#### Population

Black bears are distributed from the BC-Yukon border to the northern tree line near Old Crow. They are most numerous in the southern and central parts of the territory. There are about 10,000 black bears in Yukon.

Yukon's mountainous terrain tends to concentrate the range of black bears. Unlike the grizzly, this is a forest bear and its range in Yukon is confined to the river valleys and their finger-like strips of forested habitat.

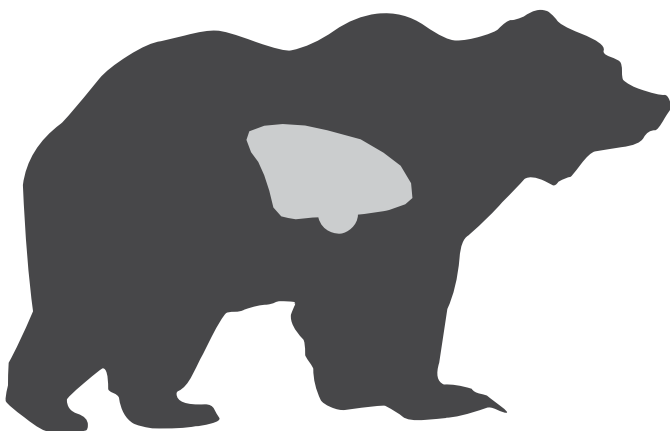
#### Eat that bear

The law does not require you to save the meat when you kill a bear. But if you leave the meat in the bush, you're giving up a lot of decent meals. To eliminate the risk of trichinosis, cook the meat to an internal temperature of 77° C (170°F). If your bear meat has a strong flavour, marinate the meat overnight or have it made into sausage.

## Grizzly bear

Vital target area

Population

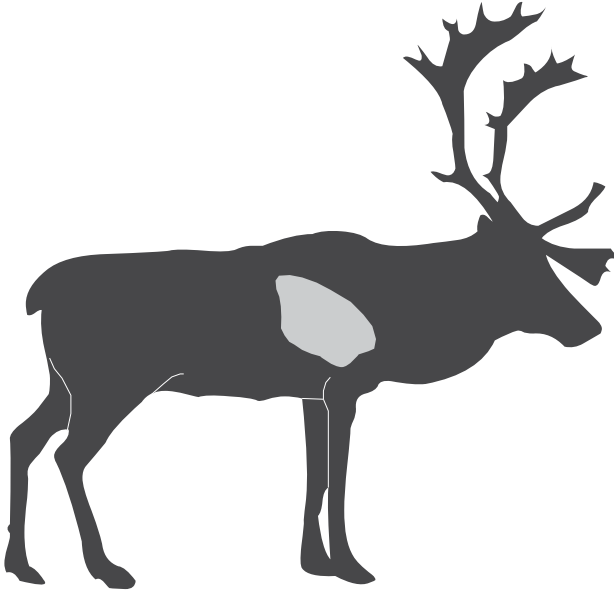


Grizzly bears inhabit the entire Yukon from the BC border to Herschel Island-Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park off the Arctic coast. Since Yukon's northern interior environment is less productive than southern or coastal environments, Yukon grizzly bears are spread thinly over the landscape. There are about 6,000 to 7,000 grizzly bears in Yukon.

The Government of Yukon is working to reduce the number of bears that are destroyed each year because of human-bear conflicts. The reproductive rate of the species is low and the loss of even a few female bears can have a significant impact on a population. Visit [Yukon.ca/report-human-wildlife-conflict](https://www.yukon.ca/report-human-wildlife-conflict) to learn how you can minimize human-wildlife conflicts in Yukon.

# Caribou

Vital target area



## Population

There are about 400,000 caribou ranging across Yukon, grouped into 30 herds of widely different sizes. The Porcupine caribou herd in northern Yukon is by far the largest herd, last estimated at 218,000 animals in 2017.

The Government of Yukon and its partners conduct regular surveys to assess the size and status of herds throughout Yukon.

## Hunting tips

### Male vs. female

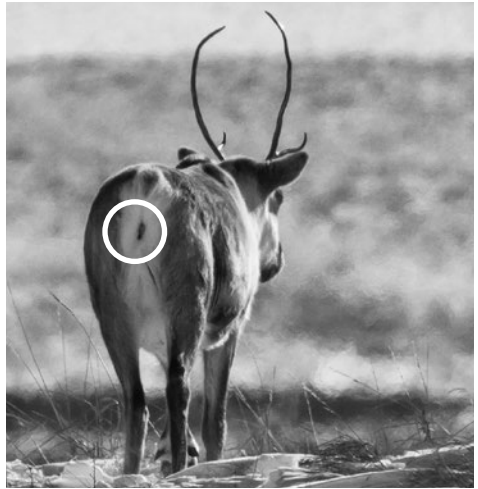
It can be difficult to determine the sex of a caribou. Both sexes have antlers in the fall. Young males and mature female caribou also have antlers that are often the same size – there is no way to tell the difference just by looking at their antlers.

To identify a caribou's sex, look for:

- a **penis sheath** for a male; or
- a **black vulva patch** for a female.



*Male caribou.*



*Female caribou.*

*Photo: Alaska Department of Fish and Game*

Getting behind the caribou will give you the best view for determining sex.

Other clues to a caribou's sex:

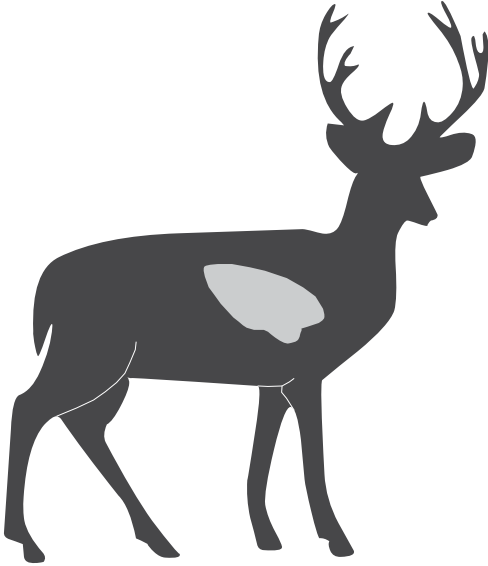
- male caribou urinate forwards; and
- female caribou urinate backwards, behind the animal.

### Rut

The meat of a large male caribou during rut may have a very strong taste that many people don't like. The rut usually happens mid-September through mid-October. Avoid hunting mature caribou during the rut.

## Mule deer

Vital target area



### Population

Mule deer occur naturally in many parts of south and central Yukon. Generally, greater numbers are observed near agricultural areas and along roadways. Deer can be seen regularly as far north as Dawson City and the south Dempster Highway.

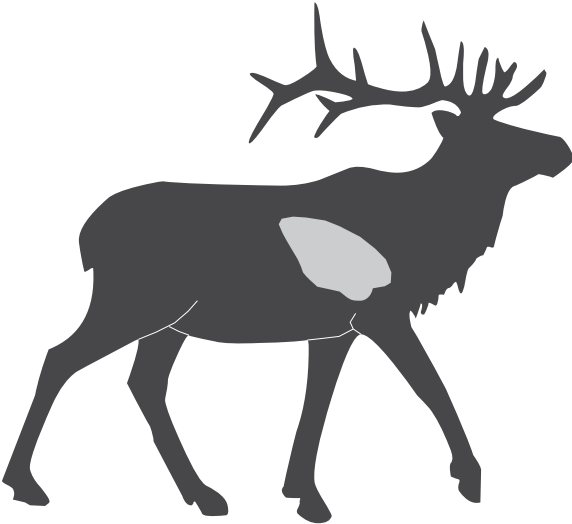
Deer in Yukon are at the northern extreme of their range and, as such, are vulnerable to severe winters. This may result in large swings in the number of animals from year to year.

### White-tailed deer

White-tailed deer have been observed in southern Yukon, but sightings are not common. If you see a white-tailed deer, take a picture and report the location to the ungulate biologist at 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5787.

# Elk

## Vital target area



## Population

Yukon's elk are the farthest north of all elk in North America. Most are descended from animals introduced from Alberta's Elk Island National Park in the 1950s and 1990s, with the exception of small numbers moving into southeast Yukon from BC.

The Takhini herd ranges mainly in the Takhini Valley west of Whitehorse to the Aishihik River. The smaller Braeburn herd ranges along the North Klondike Highway between Fox Lake and Carmacks. There are about 300 elk in Yukon.

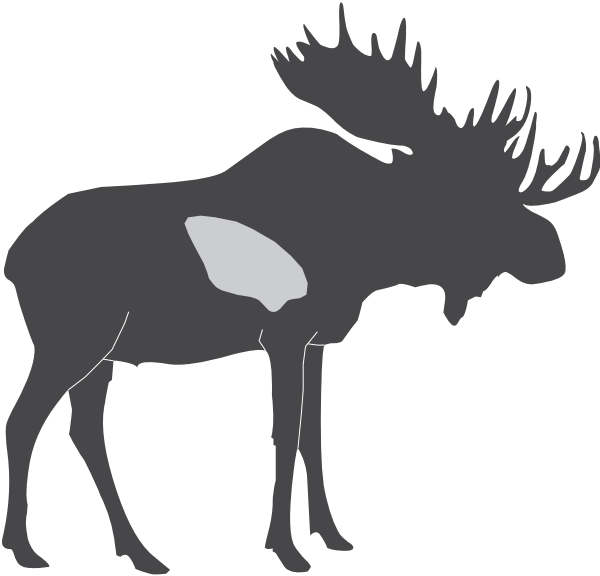
For more details, see the latest *Management plan for elk in Yukon* at [Yukon.ca/elk](http://Yukon.ca/elk).

## Hunting tips for deer and elk

Deer are often seen on south-facing grassland habitats, common along Yukon's highways and river valleys. Elk primarily use aspen parkland and grassland habitats common along highways in southwest Yukon. Both are known to enter agricultural areas. You'll likely be hunting in areas where human activity is common. Remember to get the appropriate consent to access either private or Settlement Land before you hunt, and follow all the rules about hunting near roads and private property.

## Moose

### Vital target area



### Population

Moose densities throughout Yukon generally range between 100 and 250 moose for every 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> of suitable moose habitat, although densities in excess of 400 moose have been recorded in a few areas. Yukon moose densities are relatively low when compared to other regions of North America. This is in part because Yukon moose co-exist with three relatively intact predator populations: wolves, black bears and grizzly bears.

### Management

The Government of Yukon currently manages moose in 60 Moose Management Units (MMUs).

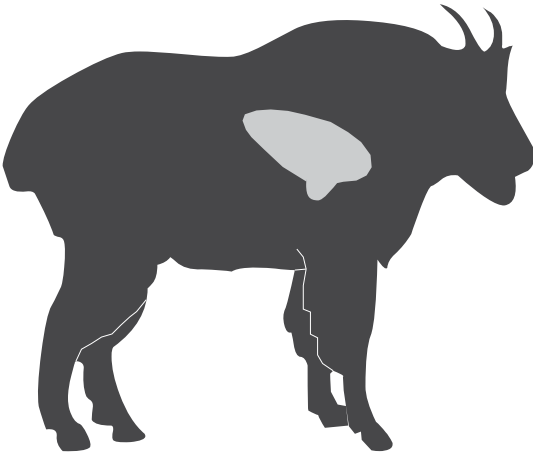
Moose surveys are focused in MMUs where harvest rates are high and/or where moose declines have occurred or are suspected. High harvest rates are often associated with easily accessible areas.

For more information on moose management, download the *Science-based guidelines for management of moose in Yukon* from [Yukon.ca/moose](http://Yukon.ca/moose).



## Mountain goat

Vital target area



### Population

Mountain goats are relatively uncommon in Yukon because they are at the northern limit of their range. An estimated 1,400 goats are found only in the lower third of the territory, mainly in isolated pockets in the southwest and in the Logan Mountains north of Watson Lake. More than half of Yukon's mountain goats live in Kluane National Park and the adjoining Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary.

### Management

We must make goat management decisions with caution because of the nature of this species. When threatened, goats run to cliffs where they are out of reach of natural predators, but not hunters. Their range use is strongly traditional and predictable because of specialized habitat requirements. While these traits help goat hunters, they can also make goats vulnerable to over-hunting. Small populations may not withstand any hunting.

## Hunting tips

### Harvest males

Mountain goats have lower population growth rates than other hooved animals, and adult female survival strongly influences whether or not a population goes up or down. We encourage you to pick male goats.

### Male vs. female

It can be hard to tell the difference between male and female goats at a distance. Get close and be patient.

To identify a goat's sex, look at the horns.

- Male goats have thicker horns and a larger horn base. Horns are closer together, and taper with a gradual curve.
- Female goats have thinner horns and a smaller horn base. The horns are further apart, and taper with a sharper curve near the tip.



*Male goat horns. Photos: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Kevin White.*

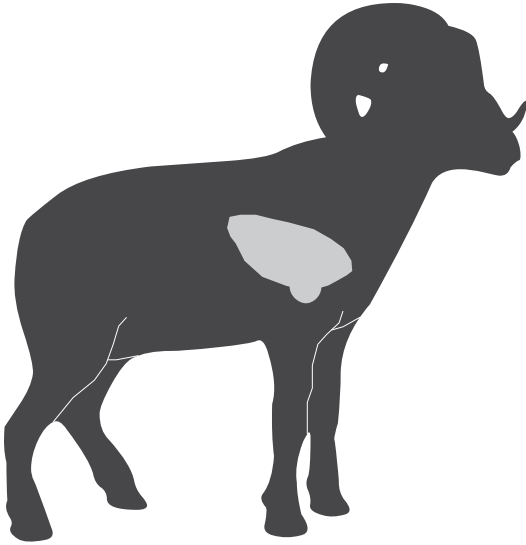
*Female goat horns. Photos: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Phil Mooney (left), Kevin White (right).*

Other clues to a goat's sex:

- male goats stretch forward to urinate;
- female goats squat to urinate;
- male goats are either alone or in small groups of two to three animals; and
- male goats are visibly larger than female goats.

## Thinhorn sheep

Vital target area



### Population

Yukon has two main species of thinhorn sheep.

- Dall's sheep. There are about 20,000 Dall's sheep in Yukon.
- Stone's sheep. The population of Stone's Sheep is yet to be determined.

### Monitoring

In an effort to increase our understanding of sheep recruitment (lamb survival) across Yukon, the Government of Yukon has a monitoring program for selected sheep populations. We partner with First Nations and other territorial and provincial governments to survey sheep. This program informs sheep management decisions.

### Management

A healthy thinhorn sheep population needs genetic diversity. By mainly hunting older males, we ensure that as many rams as possible have the opportunity to reach full curl and start breeding.

## Hunting tips

### Make sure it's full curl

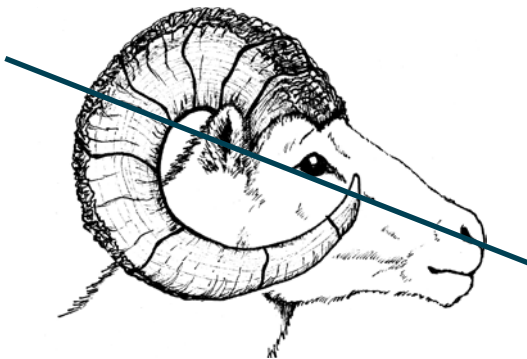
You can only harvest rams that are full curl or 8 years old or older. Yet every year licensed hunters shoot rams that are undersize and underage by mistake.

### **If you are not absolutely sure it's a full-curl ram, don't shoot.**

Whether the ram you harvest is legal or not, you must report your kill and make the compulsory submissions required by your permit. If your ram is undersize and underage, you will have to turn in the meat, horns and hide as well. You will also have to explain the circumstances leading to the unlawful kill and could face serious consequences.

### What is full curl?

When viewed from the side, with horn bases aligned, a full curl male has at least one horn that **extends beyond** a line running from the centre of the nostril to the lowermost edge of the eye. Check the horns carefully.



### Steps for selecting full curl rams

- Seek advice from experienced, successful sheep hunters and/or professional guides before you hunt.
- Study live sheep, sheep photos, sheep horns and mounted sheep, especially at various angles.
- Use the finest quality optics that you can afford (binoculars and spotting scope with tripod).
- View sheep squarely from the side. Viewing sheep from above and below make the horns look larger than they truly are.

- Do not depend on using annuli (growth rings on the horns) to determine legality. False annuli can and do occur on sheep horns.
- Calm yourself before deciding whether the ram in your sight is legal or not. Adrenaline and the excitement of the hunt may impair your judgement.
- Compare what you see to the illustration on the previous page. This image is also in the *Yukon hunting regulations summary*. Use it as a final reference in the field.

Brush up on your ability to spot full curl rams by watching “Yukon Sheep ID” on the Department of Environment’s YouTube channel at [youtube.com/environmentyukon](https://www.youtube.com/environmentyukon).

### Trails in sheep country

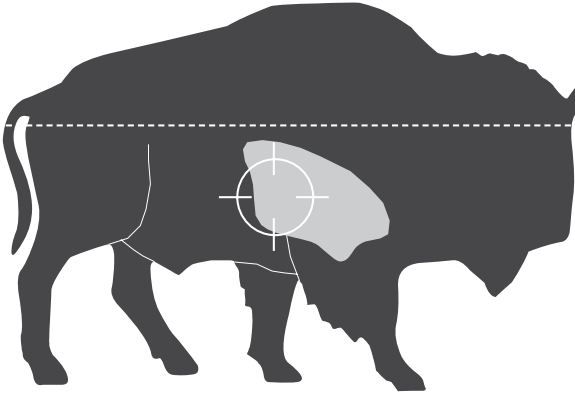
The Government of Yukon has become aware of an increasing number of trails into thinhorn sheep ranges, especially near highways in south-central and southwestern Yukon. More people using existing and growing trail networks can disturb and displace sheep from traditional ranges and can lead to overhunting. Consider this when planning your sheep hunt.



*Fannin's Sheep, ram. Fannin's sheep are a hybrid between Stone's Sheep and Dall's Sheep.*

## Wood bison

### Vital target area



Wood bison vertebrae have a long spur of bone at the top. This means their spinal cord sits much lower than in other big game species, and so do their vital organs.

**You will need to aim lower to hit the vital target area.**

Looking at a bison from the side, imagine a line from eye to tail to locate the spinal cord. To centre your shot, aim behind the front shoulder and halfway between this line and the bottom of the bison's belly.

Hunters can accidentally wound bison when they aim too high. Wounded bison can suffer for days or even years from bullet injuries and in many cases die a slow, painful death. Shot placement and follow-up are critical to ensure bison are not wasted.

### Population

For thousands of years, bison were abundant across much of Yukon. Climate-induced changes to the landscape, along with overhunting, resulted in them almost becoming extinct in western Canada and Alaska.

Bison were reintroduced to Yukon in the late 1980s as part of a national program to recover an endangered species. This was one of the largest wildlife conservation programs ever undertaken in Yukon. Bison have overall done well in Yukon, and the population has grown from the 170 animals released between 1988 to 1992 to an estimated 1,300 to 1,400 animals in 2019. Nevertheless,

they are one of only a dozen or so populations of bison roaming freely across North America.

While wolves have begun to prey on bison, wildlife managers have relied on hunting to limit the growth of the population.

## Meat

The Aishihik bison herd is one of the only populations in the world large and healthy enough to support an annual hunt. Bison provide Yukoners with healthy meat and cherished opportunities to hunt during the late winter. A large bull bison can weigh up to 1,000 kg (2,200 lb.) on the hoof. Even though most of this weight is from the head and viscera, an animal can yield more than 240 kg (530 lb.) of meat. An average adult cow bison weighs about 450 to 630 kg (1,000 to 1,400 lb.).



Disturbance by snowmobiles during winter months can keep bison and other wildlife from getting enough food and rest. Be mindful of unnecessary disturbances while you're out on the land, including disturbing trappers or their equipment.

*Snowmobiling during a school bison hunt in March of 2020.*



## Field dressing a big game animal

There are several ways to process a big game animal. Regardless of what method you choose, always keep the meat cool, clean and dry. Two or more people will make processing much easier. If you want the animal mounted by a taxidermist, consult the relevant resources on how to skin it for this purpose.

Consider these points when choosing a method.

- Removing the organs as soon as possible is the best way to start the cooling process. If this is not done carefully, you can spill gut contents, feces or urine onto the meat.
- The more cuts you make into the meat, the more you expose it to dirt, egg-laying insects and other sources of contamination. Cutting the animal into the largest manageable pieces possible and leaving meat on the bone is the best way to avoid this.
- If you have a large animal, or if you need to carry the meat a long distance, deboning some or all of the animal may be your best option.

To watch a video on how to field dress big game, visit [youtube.com/environmentyukon](https://www.youtube.com/environmentyukon).

### The conventional field dressing method

#### Step 1: Confirm the animal is dead

Approach the animal from the spine side, and make sure there's no movement of the chest or limbs. Use your firearm or a long stick to touch the eyeball. If the animal blinks, it's still alive. Kill it humanely with a single shot to the area where the base of the skull meets the neck. Make the shot at close range. Site down the barrel of your firearm; don't use your scope for this shot.

#### Step 2: Cancel and attach the seal

Cancel your big game seal and attach it to the carcass. To find out where to attach the seal, check the current *Yukon hunting regulations summary*.

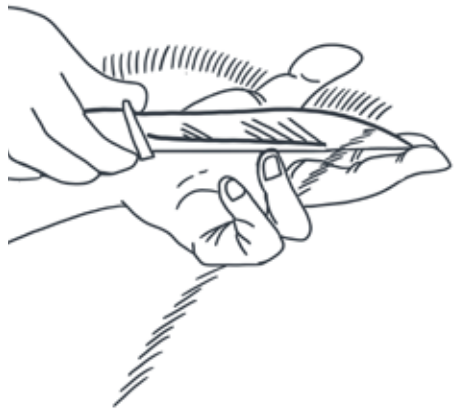


### Step 3: Initial cuts

1. Move the animal onto its back if possible. Tie its legs out or have your hunting partner hold them while you work. You can also work with the animal on its side, but it's more challenging. If you use a knife, cut from the underside of the hide as much as you can with the blade pointing up. A hooked-blade utility knife makes it easy to do these cuts.
2. Starting at the chin of the animal, cut straight down the mid-line of the belly towards the hind end, moving your cut to one side of the genitals before stopping just short of the anus. Cut only through the hide. Be careful around the abdomen. You don't want to puncture the gut cavity.
3. Cut through the hide on the back of each leg several inches below the knee joint. Continue these cuts downward to join the main cut you made along the belly. Make a circular cut through the hide around each lower leg below the knee joint.
4. Skin back the hide from either side of your mid-line belly cut to fully expose the brisket plus about 15 cm (6 in) of the abdomen.



First cuts.



How to hold the knife.

#### Step 4: Evidence of sex

Check the *Yukon hunting regulations summary* to find out which compulsory submissions and what evidence of sex you need for the species you hunt.

For some big game species, the animal's penis acts as evidence of sex. If this applies to the species you're field dressing, skin out the penis and scrotum and direct them towards the back of the animal in case urine spills out. Leave the skin from the scrotum attached to one of the hindquarters.

#### Step 5: Open the body cavity

Follow your mid-line cut with your blade pointed up, or use a special tool designed for this purpose. You can use your other hand and arm to push down on the gut and guide your knife. Be very careful to not puncture the gut, which will already be starting to bloat.

#### Step 6: Open the chest cavity

- Use a saw to split the brisket, or use a knife or saw to cut through the cartilage joints and remove it whole.
- Following the mid-line of the throat, cut through the tissue to expose the esophagus and trachea (windpipe). Tie off the esophagus with strong cord or plastic cable ties close to the head in two places about 5 cm (2 in) apart, and cut through both it and the trachea in between your tie off locations.



*Tying off the esophagus and intestine.*

## Step 7: Split the pelvis

1. Spread the hind legs and cut through the muscle on the mid-line of the pelvis. Using a saw, carefully cut through the pelvis bone. Be careful not to puncture the colon or bladder.
2. Using a thin, sharp knife (a fillet knife works well), cut a ring around the anus, again being cautious not to puncture the colon or bladder. Use a plastic cable tie or strong cord to tie it off so it doesn't leak.

## Step 8: Remove the guts

Removing the organs as soon as possible is the best way to start the cooling process. If this is not done carefully, you can spill gut contents, feces or urine onto the meat.

1. The diaphragm separates the chest cavity from the gut cavity and is connected to the entire inner wall of the animal's ribs. Start cutting this away to begin freeing the organs from the body.
2. When you have separated the most easily accessible parts of the diaphragm, get your partner to grab hold of the trachea (a small hole cut into it can make it easier to hang on to) and start pulling it back toward the hind end of the animal. The organs are attached to the spinal column of the animal with thin tissue. You'll need to cut through this as your partner pulls them away.
3. Get your partner to keep pulling as you cut through the connective tissue and roll the paunch and intestines out of the side of the animal.
4. Salvage the heart, liver, tongue and kidneys to eat or give away.
5. Remove any blood from inside the body cavity and wipe it clean. Roll the rest of the gut pile out of the way.

## Removing the meat

This method will break the animal down into eight pieces:

- the neck;
- two front quarters;
- the loin;
- two sides of ribs; and
- two hindquarters.

You can debone the meat at home, on site, or leave the bones intact for bone-in steaks and roasts.

### Step 1: Finish skinning

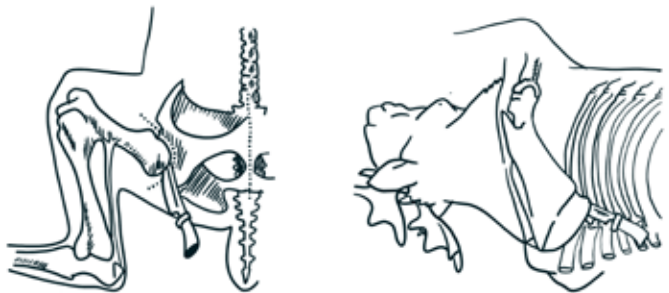
With the animal laying on one side, skin out the top side all the way to the spine.

### Step 2: Remove the hind leg

Raise the top side hind leg and carefully cut along the pelvis toward the ball and socket joint at the hip. Using your knife, sever the joint and continue your cut through to the top of the pelvis (leaving the sirloin portion intact) until the leg is completely severed. Set it aside on a clean surface such as a tarp, game bag or the half-skinned hide.

### Step 3: Remove the front leg

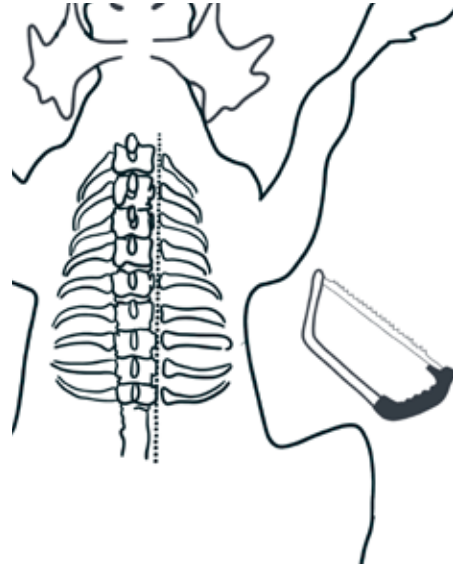
Trim away any bloodshot meat. It will spoil quickly. Raise the topside front leg and cut it off by slicing through the meat from the armpit to the shoulder. There is no bone-to-bone connection in the shoulder. Just run your knife between the large flat shoulder blade and the ribs. Once you sever the leg, set it aside on the clean surface.



Removing the hind and front legs.

#### Step 4: Remove one side of ribs

Using your saw, cut through the ribs to remove them in one large slab. Be careful not to cut into the “backstrap” portions that form a triangle between the ridge of the spine and the top of the ribcage.



Removing the ribs.

#### Step 5: Do the other side

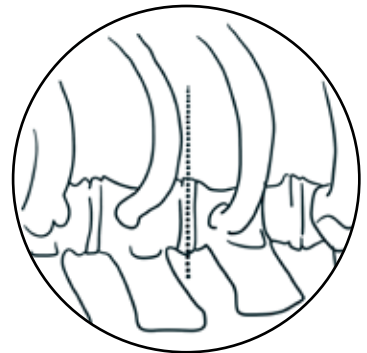
Taking care to protect the exposed meat from the ground by spreading out the hide and/or laying out a tarp, flip the animal over and skin the rest of it out. Remove both legs and the ribs the same way you did on the other side.

#### Step 6: Remove the head and neck

Cut off the head where the spine meets the skull. A knife should be all you need to sever this joint. When you've removed the head, you can then use a saw to cut the neck off where it meets the ribs.

#### Step 7: The final cut

Cut through the spine in between the second and third ribs (counting from the tail forward) to preserve the tenderloins along the underside of the spine.



The final cut.

### Protect yourself while field dressing

- Before and after field dressing an animal, wash your hands!
- Wash your knives frequently in clean water.
- If you cut yourself during field dressing, clean and bandage the wound before continuing with your work. Consult a doctor as soon as possible.

## The “gutless” method

Some hunters choose to leave the guts intact until they’ve removed most of the meat. This increases the risk of spoilage because the guts retain heat inside the animal. You should only leave in the guts if you are confident in your skills and know that you can get to the guts in a short amount of time. It is not recommended in warmer temperatures.

## Deboning

If you have a large animal, or if you need to carry the meat a long distance, deboning some or all of the animal may be your best option.

Deboning an animal can be useful if you want to reduce the weight of the load you need to carry (e.g., on a backpacking hunt). Keep in mind that deboning an animal can expose much more meat to the air, leading to more risk from contamination.

## The boning out method

We’ll describe here the deboning of an animal using the “gutless” method, but you can also debone your harvest using the conventional field dressing method described previously.

Step 1: Attach the seal

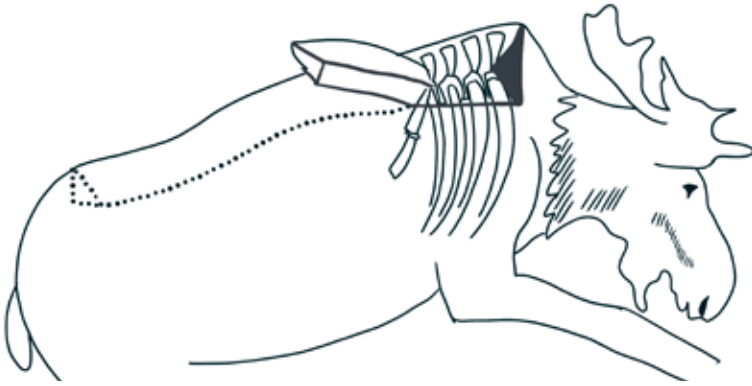
Step 2: With the animal on its side, skin out the top side of the animal

Step 3: Remove the top side legs

Step 4: Remove the top side backstrap and neck slab

Remove the top side backstrap by making two long, deep cuts lengthwise on the back of the carcass. The cuts will join at the backbone to form a “V” shape. Make the first cut down along the mid-line of the back to the point where the spine joins the ribs. This cut should run from the neck to the pelvis. Make the second cut along the side of the ribs and run it upward to join the first cut along the top of the rib cage. This cut should also run from the neck to the pelvis. When it’s finished the backstrap should come off in one long strip. Next, fillet the slabs of muscle off the topside of the neck. (See the illustration on page 35.)

Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4 on the other side



Removing the backstrap.

Step 5: Remove the guts as described in the conventional method on page 31

Step 6: Remove the tenderloins

Fillet off the two strips of meat that run on the underside of the spine from the pelvis to the third rib. You can place these in a game bag with the backstrap.

Step 7: Remove the ribs

To bone out the brisket and ribs in place, fillet the slabs of meat off the outside of the rib cage, then cut out the strips of meat from between the ribs.

Step 8: Remove the remaining meat

Check the carcass over carefully and remove any remaining pieces of edible meat.

You can further debone the animal by removing the meat from the legs you set aside earlier. A fillet knife works well for this. After you've removed all the edible meat you should be left with the head, a gut pile, hide and a clean skeleton.



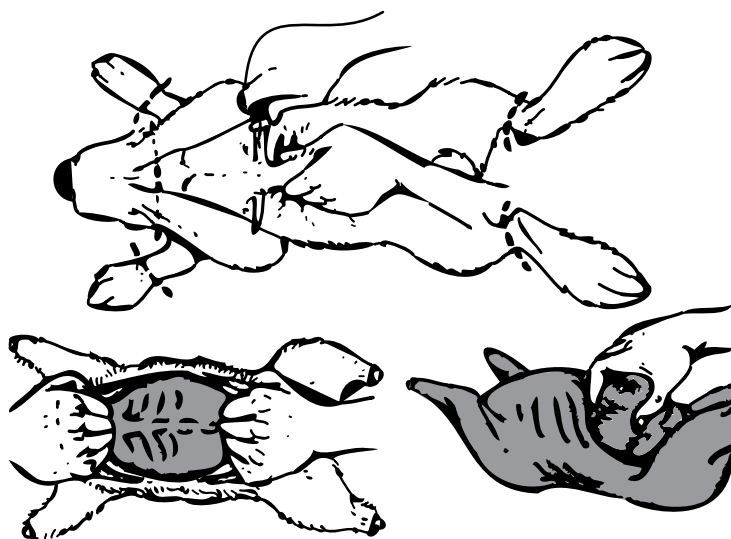
Parts left in the field.

# Field dressing small game animals or game birds

## Small game

Here is one way to dress snowshoe hares and arctic ground squirrels.

1. Remove the head and cut off the feet at the joints.
2. Pinch the loose skin on the back and cut through it with your knife.
3. Grasp the hide on both sides of the cut and pull apart.
4. Strip the hide completely off both ends.
5. Cut off the tail.
6. Open the body cavity at the mid-line on the belly.
7. Clean out the entrails.
8. Trim away any shot-up meat and tissue.
9. Wipe the carcass clean with dry grass or cloths.





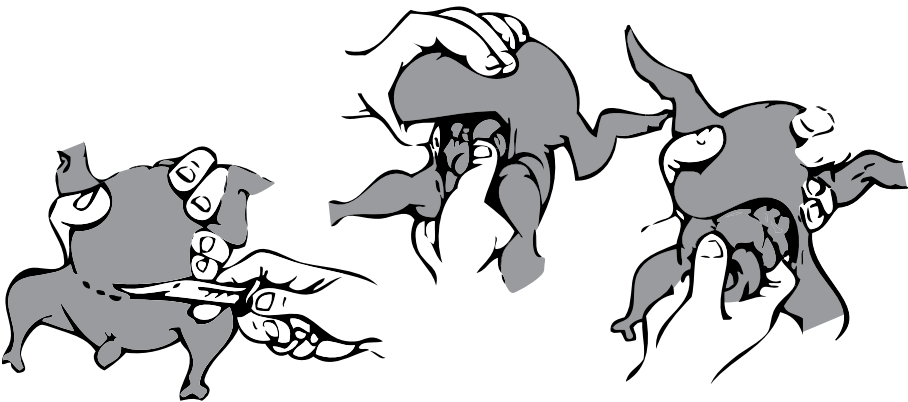
## Game birds

If you decide to pluck the bird's feathers rather than skin it, you should clean the bird immediately since feathers begin to set more firmly in the skin as soon as the bird dies. If you're going to skin the bird, you can do it in the field or you can leave the skin on to protect the meat until you get it home.

The skinning can wait, but the gutting can't. If you don't gut the bird soon after you kill it, the meat will begin to spoil.

Here is one way to clean it.

1. Hold the bird with the breast facing upward.
2. Cut into the body cavity at the base of the breast, following the breast's lower margin.
3. Bend the two sections back and away from each other.
4. Remove the entrails.
5. Wipe the body cavity with dry grass or cloths.
6. Let the carcass cool.





## **Meat care**

The meat should be hung in a cool (just above 0°C), dry, well-ventilated place that is protected from flies. Let the meat hang for 7 to 10 days to age and tenderize before cutting it up into meal-size portions for the freezer. Meat will spoil if not hung properly, especially if temperatures are not cold enough or if ventilation is poor.

### **Keep it cool**

The faster the meat cools, the better it will be. Start dressing out the animal shortly after it's killed.

### **Keep it clean**

Spilled urine, feces, blood clots or stomach contents can taint the meat. Try not to puncture the bladder, intestines or stomach, and trim away any shot-up meat.

### **Keep it dry**

Wipe meat dry and expose it to air. It will form a dry, protective crust that protects the meat from egg-laying insects and stops it from spoiling.

Wrap field-butchered meat in game bags or cheese cloth. These protect the meat while still letting air circulate around it. Don't wrap meat in plastic garbage bags; it will spoil quickly that way.

### **Keep scavengers away**

If you must leave your meat pile for short periods, urinate around the pile or leave a piece of clothing on the pile. Although they aren't foolproof, these techniques will often keep scavengers away.

### **Keep it!**

Frozen, properly wrapped meat can last for three or four years without detracting from its quality. You can make freezer burnt meat into sausage. It's against the law to clear your freezer from past years' wild meat by disposing of it, donating it to mushers or feeding it to dogs.

## Hunting moose or bison? Plan to eat and share the meat

Mature moose and wood bison are big animals. One animal can provide up to a few hundred kilograms of high quality, organic edible meat. Hunters are encouraged to share this meat with their hunting partners. Kill only what you need and use all that you take, thereby conserving the resource and wildlife populations.



*Hanging meat to dry. Photo: Carol Foster.*

## First Nations perspectives

### A First Nation perspective on big game

Used with permission of the knowledge-holder.



Moose.

*“When you kill something, the animal gives its life for you. So you’ve got to give thanks to the Great Spirit. Something had to die for you to continue with your life. That’s the way I look at it.”*

– Art Johns, Carcross/Tagish First Nation Elder

The hunting traditions of Yukon Indigenous peoples have grown out of their intimate relationship with the natural world. Through wise use of local resources, the first peoples of the Yukon were able to feed, clothe and shelter themselves while developing rich communities and cultures. Moose and caribou in particular provided a bountiful source of food and raw material such as bone, hide and sinew.

While the equipment used by First Nation hunters has changed over the last 200 years, the way in which moose and caribou are used has remained essentially the same for countless generations. Art Johns of the Carcross/Tagish First

Nation knows all about traditional uses of moose and caribou. In his desire to communicate respect for wildlife, and help reduce the waste of wild meat, he has graciously provided the information you will read in the next few pages.

## Field dressing

When Art Johns dresses out a moose or caribou, he does a few things differently from the conventional field dressing method. Before gutting the animal, he cuts off the head, skins the carcass, and removes the shoulders and hams. Then he guts the animal in a unique way. Instead of cutting down the centre of the abdomen, he cuts around the edges of the flank or “belly flap.” This flap of muscle, about 2 cm (1 in) thick, covers the belly from the ribs to the pelvis and up to the back on each side. Art removes the belly flap in one large piece, emptying the belly cavity as he goes.

## Eat everything – waste nothing

First Nation peoples traditionally eat all edible parts of a moose, right down to the hoofs. This practice avoids waste and shows proper respect for the animal that gave its life. It also provides vitamins and nutrients, which are concentrated in selected body parts.

## How Art Johns makes use of the whole animal

**Shoulders, hams, loin and back** – Cut these large pieces of meat into roasts or steaks.

**Neck and shanks** – Cut a slab of meat off each side of the neck and use it in a stew or soup. The shank meat can be used the same way, or it can be left on the bone and roasted.

**Brisket, ribs and flank** – Ribs can be roasted in racks or cut up in smaller pieces and boiled. The brisket can be cooked the same way. The flank can be cut into small pieces and boiled or rolled into roasts if it has enough fat on it.

**Head** – Cut off the antlers, skin out the head and roast it over an open fire. Pick off the tender meat. The eyeballs are especially nutritious.

**Moose nose** – Singe the hair off the moose nose over an open fire, Cut the nose off the head just in front of the bone, then cut it in strips about 5 cm (2 in) wide and boil them.

**Bones** – Leave some meat on the bones. Cut them in pieces about 10 cm (4 in) long. Boil the bones, eat the meat off them and suck the rich marrow out of the centre.

**Bone joints** – The bone sections at the joints can be cut into smaller pieces and boiled in water. A fine “bone grease” will rise to the top of the pot. Let it cool until it gels and then skim it off. It makes excellent “butter” for eating with dry meat or other snacks.

**Hoofs** – Leave the hoofs attached to the lower legs. Burn the hair off and then boil the hoof and bone. Eat the meat off the bone right down to the hoofs.

**Organs** – The tongue can be boiled or roasted. The heart, kidneys and liver are usually fried. If the animal was rutting its liver may be swollen and inedible. If that’s the case, leave it in the bush for the whisky jacks and ravens that keep you company.

**Diaphragm** – The diaphragm can be cut in strips and fried right at the kill site.

**Guts** – Only certain parts of the stomach and intestines should be eaten. It’s best to learn directly from someone who knows the right parts.

The large intestines can be split lengthwise, washed out and boiled.

You can eat the organs, diaphragm, guts and flank right away. The remaining meat should be hung in a cool (just above 0°C), dry, well-ventilated place that is protected from insects.

*“If you show respect for the animal and treat it right, it will come back to you the next time you are hungry. If you don’t show respect, it will not return. That’s what we tell the children so they will learn how important it is to respect the animal.”*

– Art Johns, Carcross/Tagish First Nation Elder

## A First Nation perspective on small game

*Used with permission of the knowledge-holder.*

Hazel Bunbury of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council was raised on traditional foods on the shores of Lake Laberge and Fox Lake. "During the depression years," her mother told her, "the people at Lake Laberge lived like kings." They harvested ducks and geese, lake trout and whitefish, moose and gophers. The land was generous.

For years, Hazel taught native languages at Whitehorse Elementary School and more recently at Yukon College. She still practises her hunting and fishing traditions at Lake Laberge and the mouth of the Takhini River, with her children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren at her side. She has provided this information so others can learn about the value of small animals in First Nation culture and the proper ways to show respect.

### Gopher or ground squirrel (Tsäl/Säl)

Gophers, or ground squirrels, have always been an important food source for Southern Tutchone people. They are tasty and fairly easy to catch. In old times, gophers sometimes saved people from starvation.

Gophers were once caught in snares made from eagle feathers. Today, traps and .22 calibre rifles are used. Gophers are eaten for a short period when they first emerge from their burrows in the spring. Then they are left alone to raise their young through the summer. In the fall, gophers are harvested once again when they are fat and healthy. Gopher skins are used to make vests, jackets, blankets and robes.

Gophers can be cleaned and cooked a few different ways. Hazel's method is simple and elegant:

1. Skin it.
2. Gut it.
3. Cut off the feet and head.
4. Roast it over a fire or boil it.

To Hazel, gophers do not have a wild taste. They taste like chicken or pork. She doesn't use too much salt because that would ruin the natural flavour.

## Porcupine (Dëch'äw)



*North American porcupine.*

Porcupine are not as plentiful as gophers and are usually harvested when seen along a trail or roadway. There are many legends about the porcupine and this animal is always treated with respect by First Nations people. It has a rich, dark meat that Hazel compares to a cross between pork and beef. At the time when moose are in the rut, says Hazel, porcupine meat has a strong flavour and should not be eaten. Porcupine should not be taken in the spring either.

Porcupine can be cleaned and roasted over a fire or boiled, in the same way that gophers are eaten. The quills are used to make quillwork, jewelry and other ornaments. In old times, drinking cups made from porcupine feet were used for ritual purposes.

*“Treat the animal with respect and it will treat you the same way. That’s what my mom taught me. That’s what I teach my children and grandchildren.”*

– Hazel Bunbury, Ta’an Kwäch’än Council

In Hazel’s tradition, showing respect means you don’t harass small animals and you don’t kill something unless you’re going to eat it. It also means that when you talk about animals, you don’t make fun of them or talk about them in any way that might be disrespectful.





## How wildlife management works in Yukon

Managing wildlife is a collaborative process, guided by:

- territorial and federal legislation;
- Yukon First Nations and Inuvialuit Final Agreements and Self-government Agreements;
- transboundary land claim agreements;
- protocols and memorandums of understandings with Indigenous groups without settled land claim agreements; and
- international treaties and agreements.

The Government of Yukon works with First Nations governments, boards and councils, the federal government, and the Yukon public in developing or adjusting hunting legislation. Changes to hunting rules and regulations come after careful consideration of technical information, management needs and results of public and stakeholder engagement. In addition to hunting regulations, many of these same agencies and groups work together to develop habitat and species management plans and community-based work plans that guide wildlife management across the territory. You can see these plans by visiting [Yukon.ca/wildlife-habitat-planning](http://Yukon.ca/wildlife-habitat-planning).

The Government of Yukon and our partners rely on up-to-date and accurate hunting data to support wildlife management. You play an important part in this process by reporting your harvest and providing compulsory submissions. Giving this information is not only mandatory for licensed hunters, but it is essential to keeping healthy wildlife populations and sustainable hunting opportunities in Yukon.

### Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, established under Chapter 16 of the Umbrella Final Agreement, considers territory-wide fish and wildlife issues, engages with the public and makes recommendations to governments and First Nations on how those issues could be addressed.

Office address: Second floor, 409 Black Street, Whitehorse

Mailing address: Box 31104, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 5P7

Phone: 867-667-3754, Fax: 867-393-6947

Email: [officemanager@yfwmb.ca](mailto:officemanager@yfwmb.ca), Website: [yfwmb.ca](http://yfwmb.ca)

## Renewable Resources Councils

Renewable Resources Councils (RRCs) have been established in 10 of the 11 Traditional Territories of First Nations with Final Agreements. RRCs consider local fish and wildlife issues and trapline use and allocation, engage with community residents and make recommendations to the Minister of Environment, Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. If you live in a region that has an RRC, you can approach its members with any questions or concerns you have about fish and wildlife in your area.

### **Alsek RRC**

Phone: 867-634-2524  
Fax: 867-634-2527  
Email: [admin@alsekrrc.ca](mailto:admin@alsekrrc.ca)  
Website: [alsekrrc.ca](http://alsekrrc.ca)  
Box 2077, Haines Junction, Yukon  
Y0B 1L0

### **Carcross/Tagish RRC**

Phone: 867-399-4923  
Email:  
[carcrosstagishrrc@gmail.com](mailto:carcrosstagishrrc@gmail.com)  
Website: [ctrcc.ca](http://ctrcc.ca)  
Box 70, Tagish, Yukon Y0B 1T0

### **Carmacks RRC**

Phone: 867-863-6838  
Fax: 867-863-6429  
Email:  
[carmacksrrc@northwestel.net](mailto:carmacksrrc@northwestel.net)  
Box 122, Carmacks, Yukon Y0B 1C0

### **Dän Keyi RRC**

Phone: 867-841-5820  
Fax: 867-841-5821  
Email: [dankeyirrc@northwestel.net](mailto:dankeyirrc@northwestel.net)  
Box 50, Burwash Landing, Yukon  
Y0B 1V0

### **Dawson District RRC**

Phone: 867-993-6976  
Fax: 867-993-6093  
Email: [dawsonrrc@northwestel.net](mailto:dawsonrrc@northwestel.net)  
Box 1380, Dawson City, Yukon  
Y0B 1G0

### **Laberge RRC**

Phone: 867-393-3940, call to fax  
Email: [labergerrc@northwestel.net](mailto:labergerrc@northwestel.net)  
3A Glacier Road, Whitehorse, Yukon  
Y1A 5S7

### **Mayo District RRC**

Phone: 867-996-2942  
Fax: 867-996-2948  
Email: [info@mayorrc.ca](mailto:info@mayorrc.ca)  
Box 249, Mayo, Yukon Y0B 1M0

### **North Yukon RRC**

Phone: 867-966-3034  
Fax: 867-966-3036  
Email: [nyrrc@northwestel.net](mailto:nyrrc@northwestel.net)  
Box 80, Old Crow, Yukon Y0B 1N0

## **Selkirk RRC**

Phone: 867-537-3938

Fax 867-537-3939

Email: [selkirkrrc@northwestel.net](mailto:selkirkrrc@northwestel.net)

Box 32, Pelly Crossing, Yukon Y0B 1P0

## **Teslin RRC**

Phone: 867-390-2323

Fax: 867-390-2919

Email: [teslinrrc@northwestel.net](mailto:teslinrrc@northwestel.net)

Box 186, Teslin, Yukon Y0A 1B0

## **Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)**

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) was set up in 1988 under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. The Council provides advice to federal and territorial Ministers, Inuvialuit co-management bodies and other groups on managing wildlife, habitat and harvesting on the Yukon North Slope. If you have any concerns about wildlife on the Yukon North Slope, you can contact the council at:

Box 31539, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 6K8

Phone: 867-633-5476

Email: [wmacns@wmacns.ca](mailto:wmacns@wmacns.ca)

Website: [wmacns.ca](http://wmacns.ca)

## Porcupine Caribou Management Board

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board is an advisory board established under the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* (1985) to ensure the collaborative management of the Porcupine caribou herd – one of the largest migratory caribou herds in North America – by providing recommendations to agencies responsible for managing the herd.

The board has members from the:

- First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun;
- Gwich'in Tribal Council;
- Inuvialuit Game Council;
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in;
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
- Government of Yukon;
- Government of Northwest Territories; and
- Government of Canada.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Porcupine caribou herd you can contact the board at:

Box 31723, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 6L3

Phone: 867-633-4780

Fax: 867-393-3904

Email: [dlemke@pcmb.ca](mailto:dlemke@pcmb.ca)

Website: [pcmb.ca](http://pcmb.ca)



# Hunting and health

## Risk of disease

Although most wild animals in Yukon are healthy, there are diseases and parasites in any wildlife population. Some of these diseases or parasites can cause illness in people. These are called zoonotic diseases.

It is important that hunters learn how to protect themselves from infection. Zoonotic diseases can be spread to people through:

- direct contact with an animal;
- drinking water contaminated by feces or urine; or
- eating meat contaminated by gut contents or feces.

Only harvest animals that appear healthy. Avoid animals that show signs of illness, such as:

- poor body condition;
- weakness;
- lameness;
- swelling or lumps in the body;
- discharge or blood coming from the nose and mouth; or
- abnormal behaviour, such as an animal losing its fear of humans.

If you notice abnormalities while field dressing an animal, do not cut into diseased or abnormal areas. Wash your hands, knives and other tools in hot soapy water. Collect tissue samples or photographs of the animal and abnormal areas and report your findings to a conservation officer and/or to the Animal Health Unit of the Department of Environment.

Consult your doctor if:

- you cut yourself while butchering an animal, after cleaning the cut with soap and water; or
- you get sick after recently having eaten, or had contact with, wildlife or fish.

Animals that seem healthy can also spread diseases to people, so it is important to be aware of potential risks in the animals that you plan to harvest. For more information see the *Diseases you can get from wildlife* booklet, available from Department of Environment offices or online, visit [Yukon.ca/wildlife-health](http://Yukon.ca/wildlife-health), or contact the Animal Health Unit at [animalhealth@gov.yk.ca](mailto:animalhealth@gov.yk.ca) or 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5600.

It's against the law to waste meat from most harvested big game species even if you think the meat might be diseased. If you are concerned about the safety of the meat from an animal you have harvested, contact a conservation officer as soon as possible.

## Recommendations for meat consumption of wild game

These recommendations are based on eating these referenced amounts every year. If you do not eat any this year, you can eat twice as much next year and remain within the recommended limits.

- **Meat:** Caribou and moose meat is very nutritious, with no limit on the amount of meat recommended for consumption.
- **Organs:** The Government of Yukon has issued recommendations for consumption of organ meats based on concentrations of cadmium found in some Yukon wildlife. The recommendations vary with the type of animal and the herd. For caribou, the recommendation ranges from a maximum of seven to 32 kidneys per person per year and four to 16 livers per person per year. The recommended limit for moose liver or kidney is one per person per year.
- Tobacco contains much higher levels of cadmium than animal sources. Reducing or eliminating smoking is the most effective way of limiting cadmium intake.

## Contaminants in the Porcupine caribou herd

The Northern Contaminants Program currently monitors contaminant levels annually in the Porcupine caribou herd. It monitored other Yukon caribou herds and Yukon moose from the early 1990s until 2004. The major conclusions are below.

- Mammals, birds and plants in Yukon are largely free from contamination.
- Some animals have high levels of cadmium in their organs.
- Cadmium levels in Yukon moose and caribou appear to be stable over time.
- Mercury fluctuates over time in caribou organs, but over the long term is remaining stable in the Porcupine caribou herd.
- Fallout from the nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan, in 2012 did not affect the safety of meat harvested from Porcupine caribou.

## Lead in meat

Fragments from lead ammunition too small to see or feel can spread widely in the meat around a wound. Lead is a known neurotoxin and children are especially at risk. Make an educated decision when you buy ammunition and consider the risks from eating lead fragments in meat.

There have not been any reported instances of human illness related to eating wild game shot with lead ammunition, but you can reduce the risk of lead exposure by:

- choosing alternative ammunition that is less likely to fragment;
- avoiding shots to the hindquarters where heavy bones will result in greater fragmentation of bullets;
- discarding meat along the wound tract showing shot damage, if using lead ammunition; and
- inspecting meat grinders for lead fragments and cleaning them between grinding meat from different animals.

Harvested wild game animals are a safe source of lean, high quality protein, but it is important that hunters make informed choices to reduce the risk of negative health impacts from lead.

Learn more about non-lead ammunition from [huntingwithnonlead.org](http://huntingwithnonlead.org).

## Stop aquatic invasive species

Aquatic invasive species can harm native species by bringing disease and altering ecosystems. This affects fisheries, tourism, health and recreation in Yukon. When you are hunting by boat and moving between bodies of water, keep aquatic invaders out by taking these simple steps:



**Clean** mud, weeds and aquatic life from equipment before leaving the area.



**Drain** water from bilges, pumps, coolers and buckets before leaving the area.



**Dry** your boat and gear before heading to another body of water. It can take five days in the sun to dry. You can also power wash, freeze small items overnight, or fully submerge or soak gear in very hot water for half an hour.

Pay special attention when you are moving between lakes and rivers. Report all sightings of possible aquatic invasive species to the Department of Environment at 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5721.

To learn more, visit [Yukon.ca/aquatic-invasive-species](http://Yukon.ca/aquatic-invasive-species) or [yukoninvasives.com](http://yukoninvasives.com).





# Contact the Department of Environment

## Main office (Whitehorse)

10 Burns Road

Box 2703

Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Phone: 867-667-5652

Toll free in Yukon: 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5652

Fax: 867-393-6206

Email: [environmentyukon@gov.yk.ca](mailto:environmentyukon@gov.yk.ca)

Website: [Yukon.ca](http://Yukon.ca)

## District offices

**Carmacks** 867-863-2411

**Dawson City** 867-993-5492

**Old Crow** 867-993-5492

**Faro** 867-994-2862

**Haines Junction** 867-634-2247

**Mayo** 867-996-2202

**Ross River** 867-969-2202

**Teslin** 867-390-2685

**Watson Lake** 867-536-3210

## Animal Health Unit

Phone: 867-667-5600

Toll free in Yukon: 1-800-661-0408, ext. 5600

Email: [animalhealth@gov.yk.ca](mailto:animalhealth@gov.yk.ca)

## **Protect Yukon wildlife Turn in Poachers and Polluters**

**1-800-661-0525 • Yukon.ca/TIPP**

24 hour • Anonymous • Rewards available

### **When to call the TIPP line:**

- dangerous or aggressive wildlife encounters
- winter bear activity
- hunting or fishing out of season
- exceeding bag limits
- illegal sale of fish or wildlife
- deposit of harmful substances in lakes, streams and on the ground
- littering



If you see someone you suspect is violating wildlife or environmental laws, don't confront them. That's our job. Watch carefully and record the facts:

- date and time
- location
- number of people involved
- description of the people
- description of the vehicle and licence plate number
- details of the violation or activity

When you reach a phone call the TIPP line and report the details of the offence. You'll be helping the wildlife conservation effort and you may be eligible for a cash reward.

On the back cover: Yukon hunter Catherine Welsh  
looking for a mature ram.



[Yukon.ca/hunting](https://Yukon.ca/hunting)