Chronic wasting disease, or CWD, is a fatal disease that impacts deer, elk, moose, and reindeer. The source of the disease is an abnormal prion (a form of protein). These prions concentrate in locations such as the brain, spinal cord, eyes, and in the lymph nodes and spleen. Not in meat or muscle tissue. According to the World Health Organization, there is no scientific evidence that CWD can infect humans. However, public health and wildlife officials recommend practicing these common-sense measures when handling and processing venison products.

Field dressing
- Wear rubber or latex gloves when field dressing.
- Minimize contact with the brain, spinal cord, spleen and lymph nodes as you work.
- Use only knives or utensils selected for the purpose of field dressing.
- Remove all internal organs.
- Clean knives and equipment of residue and disinfect with a 50/50 solution of household chlorine bleach and water.

Cutting and processing
- Wear rubber or latex gloves.
- Minimize handling brain or spinal tissues.
- Do not cut through the spinal column except to remove the head. Use a knife designated only for this purpose.
- Bone out the meat from the deer and remove all fat and connective tissue. This will also remove lymph nodes.
- Dispose of brain and spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, bones, and head as instructed by the State you are hunting in.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize equipment and work areas with bleach water after processing.

General precautions
- Do not eat any part of a deer that appears sick.
- Do not eat the eyes, brain, spinal cord, spleen, tonsils or lymph nodes of any deer.
What parts can I use?

You can easily find the brain, eyeballs, and spinal cord. The spleen is an internal organ in the animal’s midsection. Lymph nodes are lumps or knobs of tissue. Some are next to internal organs. Others are embedded in fat and membranes attached to muscles.

You don’t need to know exactly where the spleen and lymph nodes are, because normal field dressing coupled with boning out a carcass will remove most (if not all) of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes. Some main locations of lymph nodes are shown in the diagram below.

While preparing venison, be sure the meat is cooked thoroughly. The meat should be cooked to at least 160 degrees to reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses.

Eating Venison

Never eat meat from a deer that looks sick.

Never eat a deer’s:
• Brain
• Eyeballs
• Spinal cord
• Spleen
• Lymph nodes

To be sure you’ve removed all of the parts listed above:
• Gut the deer
• Remove the head
• Cut meat from the bone with a knife; don’t cut through bones
• Remove all fat, membranes and cords from the meat