Maine’s “Wanton Waste” Law

“It is unlawful for a person to waste a wild bird or wild animal wounded or killed by that person while hunting. “Waste” means to intentionally leave a wounded or killed animal in the field or forest without making a reasonable effort to retrieve and render it for consumption or use.”

In 2007, the Maine Professional Guides Association focused its legislative agenda on preventing the waste of our wildlife resources. Our “Wanton Waste” bill sailed through both the House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Baldacci on May 27, 2007.

How to Avoid Wasting Your Moose

Among Maine’s big game animals, moose are king, and their meat is considered the best. It is to your advantage, and your responsibility as a sportsman, to care for your moose properly and to use it fully.

Assuring quality moose meat for the table begins before the hunt and continues right through the choice of cooking recipes. Take every precaution to keep your moose meat free of dirt, debris, hair and blood, and cool it quickly to avoid spoilage.

Cool it Down Immediately

Heat will spoil meat very quickly, and large animals like moose will retain body heat for a long time. Refrigeration or applying ice is imperative.

Edible organs must be cooled quickly and kept cool. Moose meat can spoil in the hams and shoulders within a few hours. If you anticipate any delay in getting the moose into a cooler, you should at least quarter it to allow the heavier portions to cool more quickly. Applying ice blocks or gallon jugs of ice will greatly improve the meat.

Which Moose for You?

If fine eating and ease of transportation are both important to you, consider taking a young animal. Even a calf moose is much larger than the largest white-tailed deer you are ever likely to encounter!

Trophy moose heads are expensive to have mounted and impossible to display properly unless you have a large room with high ceilings. Don’t shoot a bull with a trophy rack unless you have a genuine interest in mounting and displaying it.

Quick Clean Kill

You should make every effort to kill your moose instantly. This requires use of the proper firearm and the ability to hit vital areas. As long as the bullet weight is at least 130 grains, the cartridge used is not as important as good shot placement in making a clean kill. Magnum cartridges are not needed.

Moose seldom drop in their tracks when shot and may not show any indications of having been hit. After shooting, it is best to wait a few minutes before beginning the search, and then do so quietly. Pursued immediately, a wounded moose may travel a great distance before dying. Follow-up every shot and follow the moose for a distance even if you don’t find blood at first.

Field Dressing

It takes patience to gut out a moose properly, but it’s a critical step in assuring good tasting moose meat. Every effort must be made not to rupture the stomach or intestines. Care must be taken to avoid puncturing the bladder or spilling its contents. The bladder is located below the anus as you look at the animal on its back, and at the entrance to the pelvic girdle.

Be careful not to pierce the internal organs. Tie a string tightly around the esophagus to prevent contents from contaminating the meat. As soon as several inches of the lower bowel are free, tie it off with a string. Split the hips by cutting to the pelvic bone with a knife and then split the pelvic bone with an axe or knife. Free the rectum and bladder from internal attachments, taking care not to rupture or spill contents. Take out all the viscera and all remaining lungs within the chest cavity, in order for moose to cool down appropriately.

Remove the head at the last vertebra. This is a good time to remove the tongue, heart and any other internal organs you intend to eat.

Skinning

There are two schools of thought on skinning moose. Some say the hide should be left on to keep the meat clean, deter flies, and prevent drying out. Loops cut into the hide of a quartered moose also provide convenient “handles.” Others say that the quicker cooling of the meat with the hide off offsets the advantages of
If you have a long distance to travel and the weather is warm, you may want to contact:

**Maine Professional Guides Association**
www.maineguides.org

**Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife**
www.maine.gov/ifw/

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