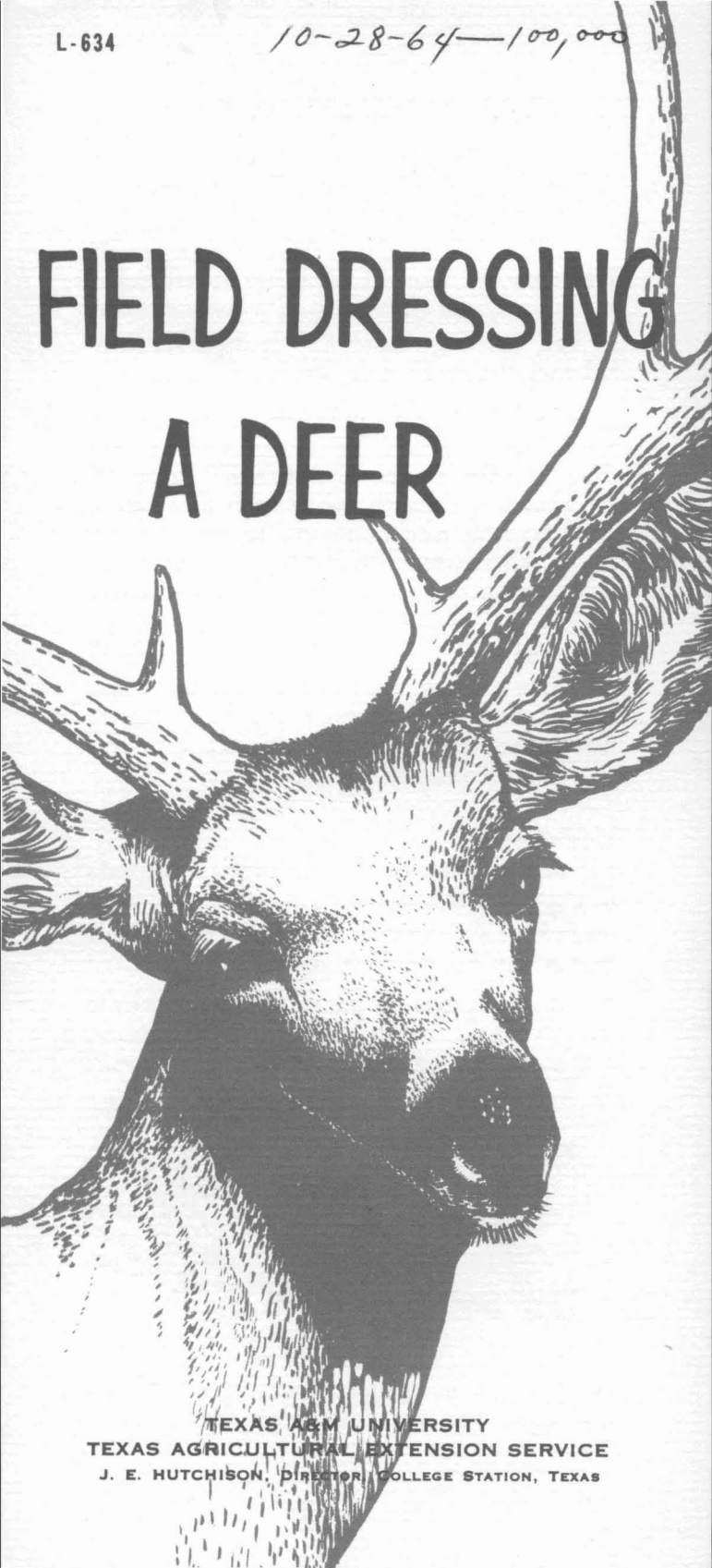


FIELD DRESSING A DEER



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
J. E. HUTCHISON, DIRECTOR, COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS

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WALLACE KLUSMANN

Extension Wildlife Conservation Specialist
Texas A&M University

IN THE PAST, many successful deer hunters learned the hard way that quality venison depends primarily on how the deer is handled from the time of the kill until it is placed in the freezer.

This leaflet gives one method of field dressing and skinning a deer. Any method resulting in a clean, well-bled carcass is satisfactory. Unpleasant experiences with venison usually result from lack of care before the meat reaches the kitchen. See Extension Bulletin, B-987, *Wild Game Care and Cooking*, for preparing venison in many delicious ways.

Procedure

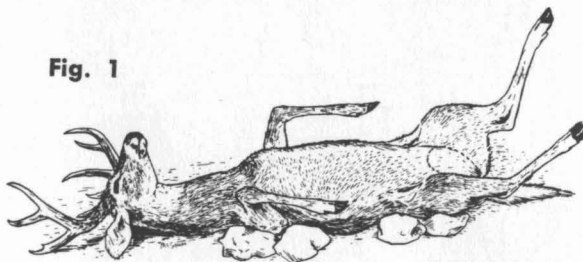
After you have shot your deer, approach it carefully from the rear; make sure it is dead. Tag the deer immediately. Begin field-dressing it at once with a sharp, strong knife.

Field-dressing

Prop the deer on its back placing large rocks or logs beside each shoulder and each hip. Remove the external sex organs with the knife, which should have at least a 4-inch blade and a guard.

Beginning between the hind legs, cut down to the pelvic bone. Then turn your knife blade up, and using your other hand to hold the skin and

Fig. 1



For safety, use knife with at least a 4-inch blade, guard and large handle. Prop deer on rocks, head up hill, if possible. Remove the sex organs.

meat away from the entrails, cut up through the breastbone and continue up the neck as far as possible.

Cut the windpipe and esophagus as far forward as possible. Lay your knife down. Grasp the windpipe and esophagus with both hands and pull downward. The insides will come free to the mid-section.

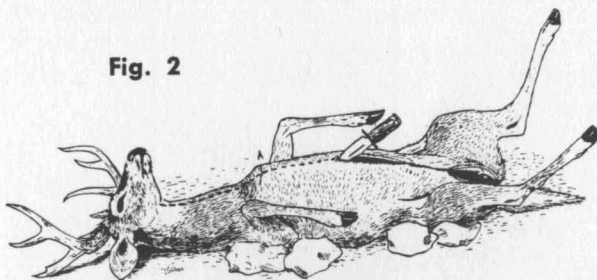
Now, remove the stones from under the deer and roll the carcass on its side. Cut the thin layer of muscle (diaphragm) that holds the entrails to the ribs. Cut this membrane near the body wall down to the backbone. Turn the deer over and do the same on the other side. Cut around the vent so the entire visceral mass can be removed without severing any part.

Lay your knife down and, using both hands, grip the entrails and pull down. All entrails will come out of the deer.

Lift the deer and lay a large rock under its rump. This helps spread the back legs. Place your knife against the middle of the pelvis to locate the seam where the bones grow together, and press down. You may need to hit your knife with a rock to cut through the bone. Finish cleaning the deer by removing any remaining viscera in the cavity.

If a tree is handy, hang the deer by the head or antlers for about 20 minutes to allow remaining blood to drain from the body cavity. If no tree is near, turn the deer upside down on a clean place to let it drain.

Fig. 2



Begin cutting between legs; do not cut deep enough to reach intestines. Cut up middle, through breastbone and all the way to jaw. If head is to be mounted, cut only to point A.

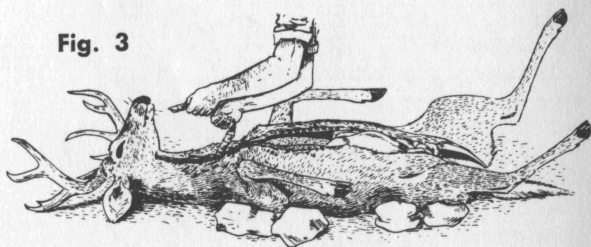
Skinning

You can begin skinning while the deer is draining. The skin comes off most easily while the deer is still warm, so it is best to skin the animal within 2 hours after killing it. If the specimen is to be mounted, hang the deer by its hind legs for skinning. Otherwise, it can be skinned downward with the deer hanging by the head. Cut down the inside of each leg to the deer's middle. Now cut the skin all the way around the neck, as close to the head as possible. Grasp the skin with both hands at the back of the head and pull down hard. Usually the skin will come off down to the front legs. Use your knife to work the skin off the legs and where the skin sticks tightly to the meat. Then pull down on the skin. It should come free. If the specimen is to be mounted, do not make any cuts in the skin between point A, Fig. 2, and the head. Allow the skin to remain intact with the head and salt or freeze until delivered to the taxidermist.

Take your deer back to camp. Hang it in a tree by the *hind legs* for 4 to 5 hours, allowing all the tiny blood vessels to drain. Wrap the carcass in a sheet, cheese cloth or sack made for this purpose.

Let your deer hang by the hind legs until it cools. Then cut it as you wish.

If you do not desire to skin and process the deer yourself, take it to a commercial processing plant in the condition shown in Figure 6.



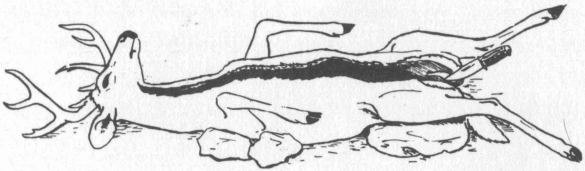
Remove windpipe and esophagus. Reach into throat, cut (point depending on whether specimen is to be mounted) and pull out windpipe by jerking toward tail; intestines will come free to the middle section.

Fig. 4



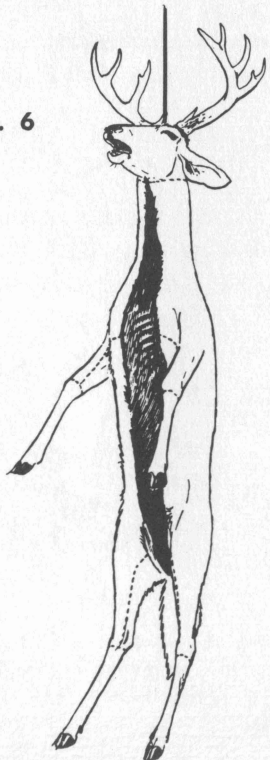
Move rocks and turn deer on its side. Slide knife into midsection and cut the membrane along the dotted line. Roll deer on other side and repeat. Then grip intestines and pull out.

Fig. 5



Now prop deer as before, putting large rock or log under its rump. Feel for seam of pelvis and cut through. Hammer knife with rock if necessary. Now clean out the cavity.

Fig. 6



Hang deer by head for about 20 minutes to drain blood. Or, turn upside down in a clean place. Now begin skinning. If specimen is to be mounted, hang deer by hind legs to skin. Cut skin on inside of legs to middle (see illustration). Cut skin around the throat (or if to be mounted, cut around shoulders). Pull down and use knife to free tight places, skinning the deer from the neck down to tail.

Always keep carcass in shade. Hang by hind legs to cool. If hung by antlers, the blood still in veins will collect in hams. Cover carcass with a sheet or cheesecloth and hang for 5 or 6 hours.

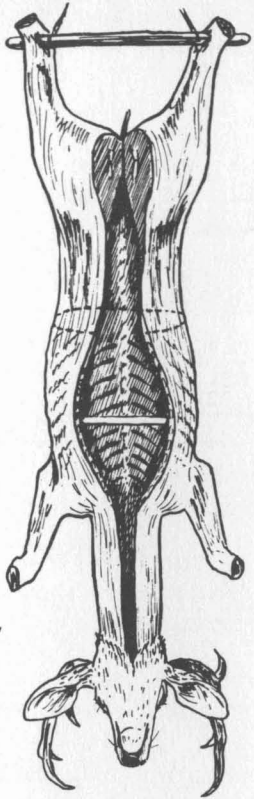


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

When it is cool, it can be cut in half or quarters, wrapped and taken home. Keep hide, head, antlers, legs and tag until the meat is placed in freezer or commercial locker.

Acknowledgments

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