

Deer Field Dressing Lesson Plan

Instructor Notes

This lesson introduces the students to the knowledge considered necessary to safely and confidently field dress whitetail deer. This lesson can serve as a stand-alone workshop or be utilized as an add on segment to other coursework.

Teaching Methods Used in This Lesson

- Discussion
- Student Hands-on Learning

Time Suggested

2 Hours

Materials Required

- 1 deer per 10 students
- 1 knife per deer
- Knife sharpener or replacement blades
- Hefty trash bags to bag entrails
- 1 tarp per deer (10x10ft) (optional)
- Nitrile gloves (Sizes S, M, L, XL)
- Butt out tool (optional)
- First aid kit

Station Set-up

20 minutes

1. Select a location that's flat and open to ensure students of all abilities can actively participate.
2. Lay out and stake down the 10x10ft tarp in the chosen location.
3. Place the deer on the tarp or directly on the ground.

Lesson Plan

Part A:

Focus Activity (1 minute)

The purpose of the focus activity is to get everyone focused on the lesson. Ask: "How many of you feel confident in your ability to field dress a deer if you get one while hunting? Has anyone field dressed any game before?"

Part B:

Objectives (1 minute)

State the learning objective to the students: At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the internal anatomy of a deer.
- Practice safe knife skills when field dressing a deer.
- Choose proper tools and personal protective equipment for field dressing a deer.
- Recall the process of field dressing a deer from start to finish.

Part C:

Teaching Method (10 minutes)

1. Say: "Sometimes field dressing an animal can be one of the most intimidating aspects of harvesting an animal." Ask the students their current comfort level or knowledge of field dressing animals.
2. Identify the tools necessary to safely field dress a deer. Convey the importance of knife selection and how blade shape and length play an important role in knife control. Stress the importance of maintaining a sharp knife to avoid over exertion which could lead to a potential injury.
3. Explain to students the importance of working slowly and methodically. Doing so reduces the chance of injury during the field dressing process.
4. Encourage students to take pictures or videos during the workshop. These videos can be used by students in the field later or for review after the class.
5. Encourage students to ask questions throughout the class. Pause or take extra time during the process to ensure all the students can view each step.
6. Rotate every student through the process and give them all an opportunity to try a hands-on part in the field dressing process. All cuts on the deer should be made by the students, while the instructor is explaining to them what to do, the instructor should never be using the knife during the demonstration.
7. Demonstrate different types of personal protective equipment that should be utilized.
8. Emphasize safety when utilizing the knife in the act of field dressing. Continually repeat how to operate safely.

Part D:

Student Exercise (1 hour 40 minutes)

The purpose of the student exercise is to have them learn the process and mechanics of field dressing a deer. Divide the class into groups of ten or less to ensure students can actively participate. Each group of ten students will be given one deer to process. Proceed with the student activity:

1. Describe the Massachusetts deer tagging process and inform students that it is required to tag the deer prior to the field dressing process.
2. Instruct the students to put on nitrile gloves. Instructor MUST also wear nitrile gloves.
3. Have the students orient the deer on its back with the head of the deer slightly uphill if the terrain allows. Ask the students “why would we want the deer to be oriented this way if possible?”
4. Ask the group for two volunteers to hold the front legs of the deer to help stabilize the deer.
5. Ask the group for one volunteer to begin the field dressing process.
6. Have the student begin by making a small, shallow incision to open the hide in the lower abdominal region just above junction of the hips (blade facing up).
7. Instruct the student to shallowly insert the knife into the incision and begin to cut the hide towards the sternum (blade facing up). Explain the importance of maintaining a shallow cut to avoid cutting into the stomach.
8. Ask the group if another volunteer would like to begin the next step.
9. With the hide now cut from the pelvis to the beginning of the sternum, instruct the student to lightly score the stomach muscles following the same direction of the previous cut. Once the cut penetrates the stomach muscles and enters the stomach cavity, instruct the student to pause so everyone can gather to view the next step.
10. Instruct the student to insert their index and middle finger into the incision made into the stomach cavity. Demonstrate how to use the v formed by the index and middle finger as a guide for the knife. Explain how to use these fingers to push the stomach and intestines away from the knife blade. Have the student continue this cut until they reach the sternum.
11. Instructors can rotate many students through this initial cut, until the body cavity is open from the sternum down to genital area.
12. Ask the group if another volunteer would like to begin the next step.
13. Have the student roll the stomach and intestines out of the body cavity to one side to expose the diaphragm. Explain the lower intestine is still attached to the anus and will therefore restrict full removal of the stomach contents at this time.
14. Identify the diaphragm and ensure all students have an opportunity to see.
15. Have the student begin the remove the diaphragm by making an incision following along the ribcage to expose the heart and lungs. During this step, allow for other students to take a turn.
16. With the diaphragm removed and heart and lungs exposed, pause for students to view.
17. Explain to the students that the next step is optional but allows for them to better visualize the next cuts. Depending on the student group comfortability level, either demonstrate how to cut the sternum or coach one student through the process. Identify the center line of the sternum, measure roughly 1.5” to either side of the

- sternum and begin a cut in the direction of the neck. Explain that by offsetting the cut from the center line, you can cut through the cartilage at the junction of the ribs and the sternum which allows for easier and safer cutting when compared to cutting through the center line of the sternum. Run this cut far enough up the sternum as to allow the students an unobstructed view of the heart, lungs, and esophagus.
18. Allow the students to rotate through to ensure they can all visualize the internal anatomy of this upper body cavity area.
 19. Ask for a volunteer student to reach into the chest cavity to sever the esophagus above the heart and lungs. Have them remove the heart, lung and esophagus and make any cuts necessary to their removal.
 20. Ask for a different volunteer to begin the process of removing the lower intestine.
 21. If preferred, instruct the student to insert the “butt out” tool prior to the next step.
 22. Have the student begin the process of cutting around the anus to remove the lower intestine. Have the student insert the knife into the flesh around the anus and begin to make a cut around the perimeter. Once the cut is complete, instruct the student to reach into the stomach cavity and pull the small intestine forward to remove the anus.
 23. Instruct a volunteer student to rotate the deer onto its stomach to allow any excess blood to drain.
 24. It can sometimes be useful to spend some time with students identifying the different organs on the removed entrails. Highlight the liver (which some hunters will take for consumption), lungs, esophagus, stomach, and heart. If students are comfortable, they should explore this hands-on.

Part E:

Student Summary/Wrap Up (10 minutes)

Ask the students to recall the important topics that were covered in the lesson (where to start your cut, how to remove the anus and lower intestine, severing the diaphragm, cutting the esophagus to remove the upper body cavity organs). Ask the students if they have any further questions. Allow for time for questions regarding deer processing, hanging time depending on ambient temperature, and other post field dressing topics.

Station Clean Up (20 minutes)

1. Bag the entrails for proper disposal.
2. Remove the deer.
3. Wash and fold the tarp.
4. Wash and sharpen knives used.