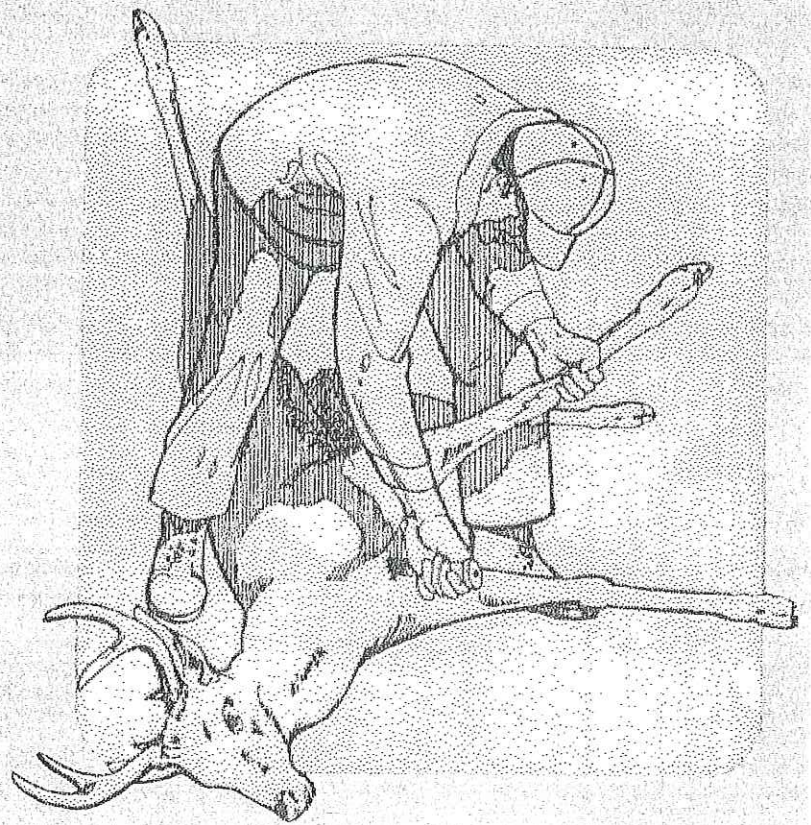


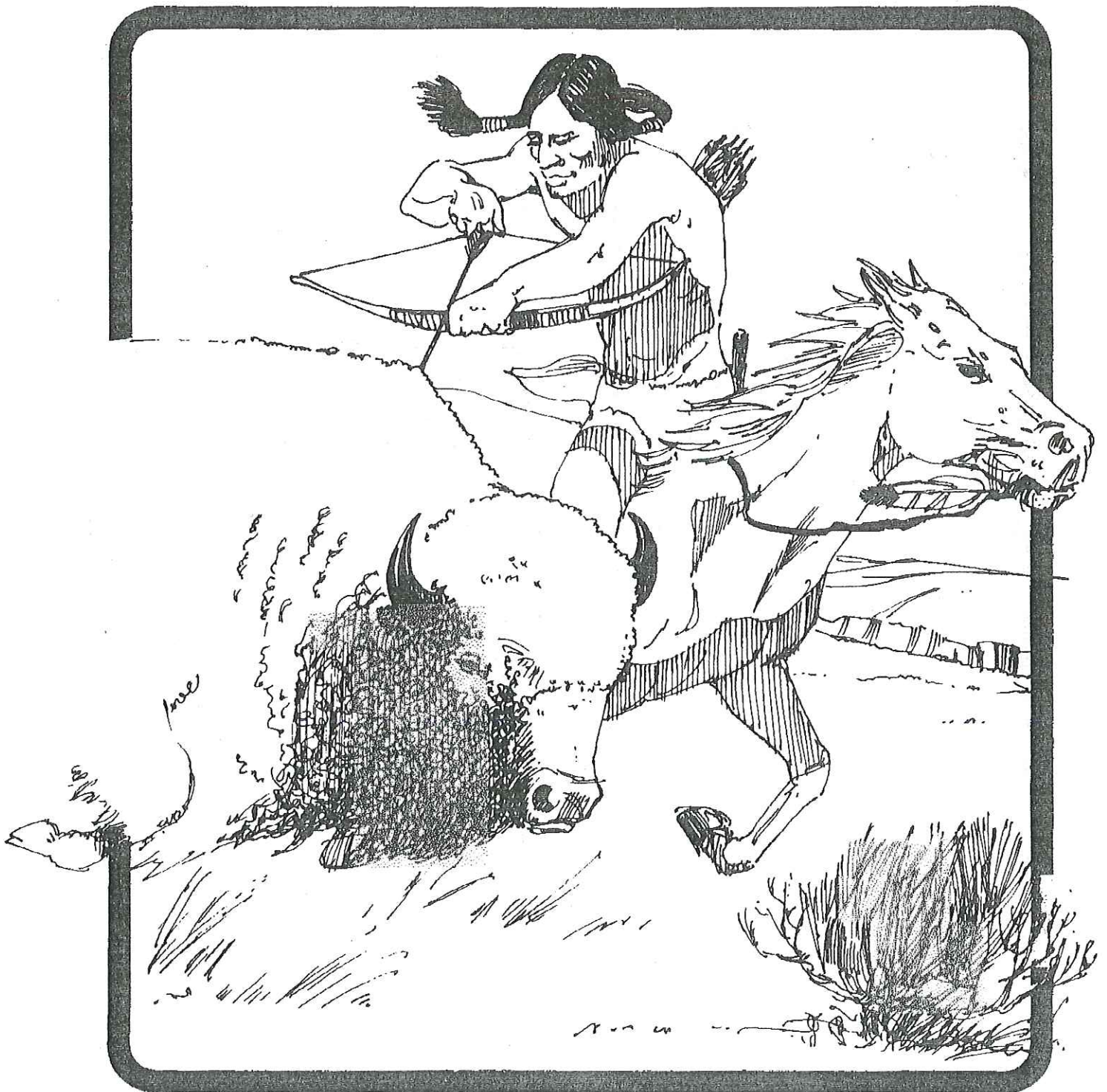
Field Techniques



Introduction

Even though the purpose of hunting has changed considerably in modern times, many of the field techniques and skills remain similar to those used decades ago. Early man hunted for survival. Hunting provided meat for food, hides for clothing, feathers for ornamentation and bones for

tools and implements. Hunting skills also served as a means of self-defense against man-eating animals. Today, hunting is done for recreational purposes but the field techniques associated with it have their roots in earlier times.



Vital Target Areas on Game

To ensure game is killed quickly and humanely, every hunter must know the vital areas of his quarry. He must develop the skills necessary to ensure his shot hits one of these areas.

Big game

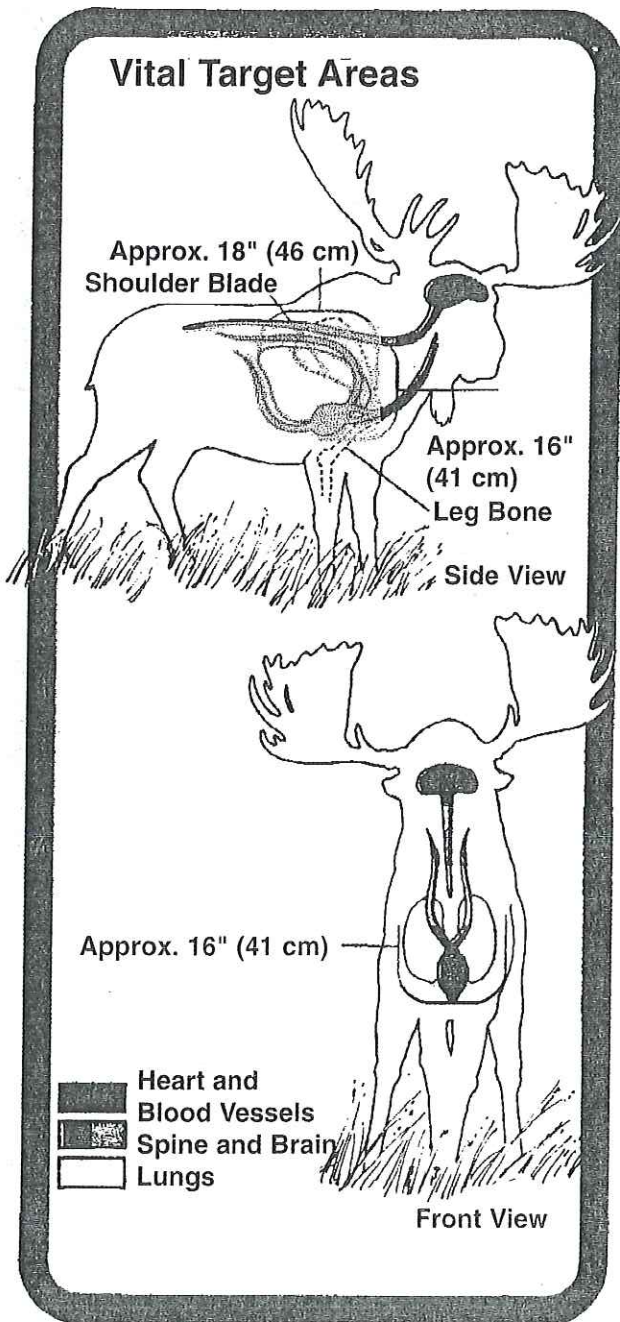
The best means of ensuring a clean kill on a big-game animal is to stalk it so you are within close range before you shoot. This will enable you to place your shot in a vital area such as the neck or immediately behind the front shoulder of the animal.

If your quarry disappears following your shot, carefully inspect the immediate area for blood or other signs which indicate the animal was hit. If such evidence is found, resist the urge to immediately pursue the animal. Wait approximately one-half hour, then follow the animal's tracks and other signs until you find it. A wounded animal will usually lie down after running a short distance if it is not being pursued.

If your quarry is still alive, carefully place your shot to dispatch it quickly. If it is a trophy animal, shoot at a vital area on its body other than the head or neck, such as the spinal column or chest cavity.

Be sure the animal is dead before getting too close to it. Always approach a big-game animal from the rear. Poke its hind leg with a stick—not your rifle—to see if it moves.

Most states' game laws require that you tag the animal as soon as it is killed and retain evidence of the animal's sex.



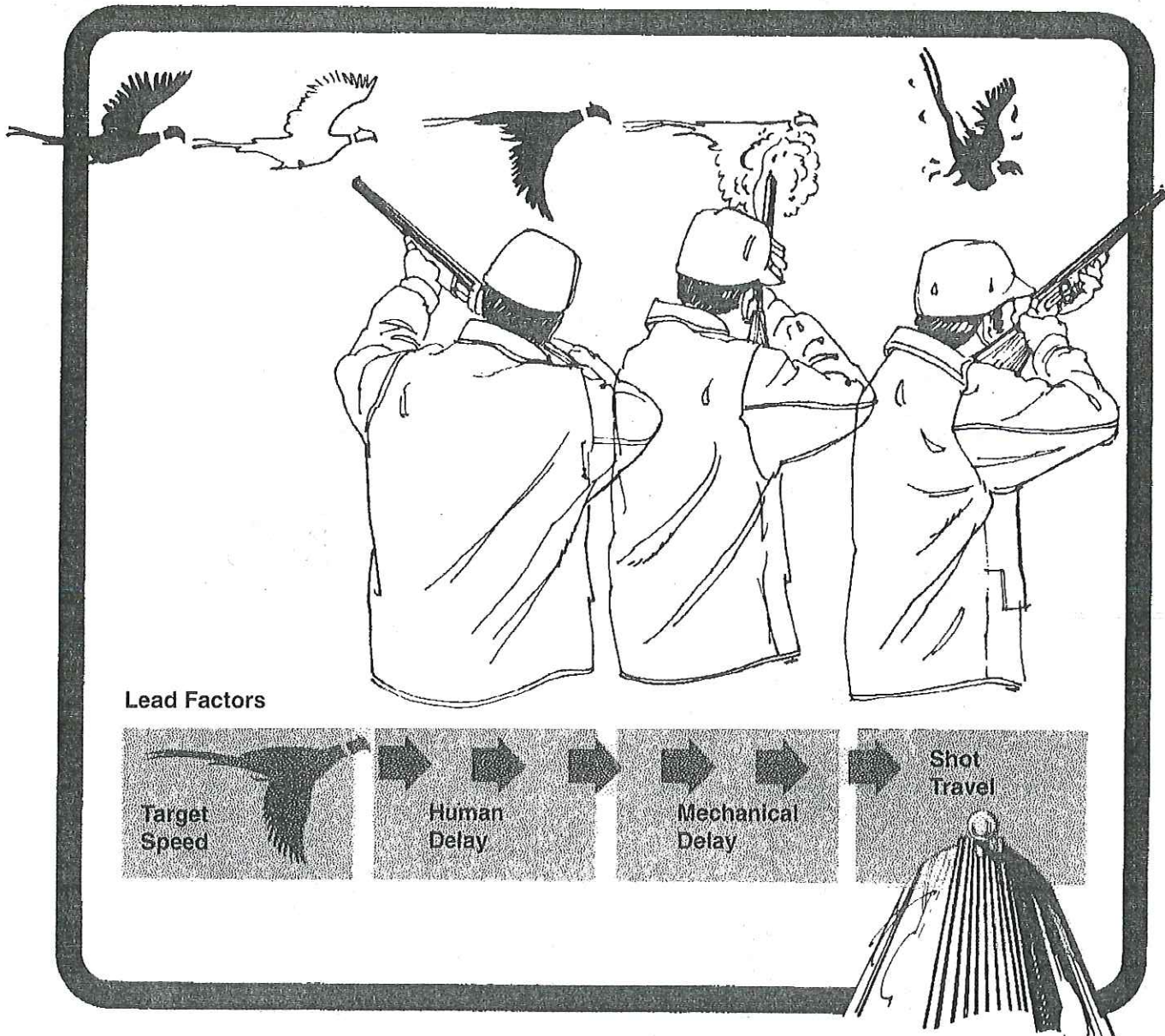
Game birds

When shooting game birds with a shotgun, the vital areas to aim at are generally in the air in front of your quarry. To hit a flying target, you must shoot ahead of it so the shot and target will run into each other. This is called "leading" the target. It requires good coordination of legs, arms, feet and hands and proper control of your eyes, brain and trigger finger to be successful.

"Sustained lead" is a method of leading a target which is used successfully by many waterfowl hunters. The gunner points the shotgun at his game and swings past it, keeping his gun on the same line as the bird's flight-path. While maintaining a lead in front of the bird, the gunner pulls the trigger and continues to swing his shotgun ahead of the bird. When the motion is smooth, the shot is usually accurate. If hurried or poorly-controlled, the shot will either miss or wound the bird.

Judging the speed and distance of the target, the timing of your own responses and the amount of lead necessary, require a great deal of practice and experience.

In contrast to big-game, you should try to recover all game birds you shoot as quickly as possible. If wounded, they may escape by hiding in dense cover or swimming away out of shotgun range. Using a hunting dog is the best way to ensure all downed game birds are retrieved. When downed birds are in water and out of reach, a fishing rod with floating lures is useful to retrieve them. Wounded birds on land should be dispatched quickly by wringing the bird's neck or using a dispatching club. Do not use your gun as a club to kill a wounded game bird. It may discharge, causing serious injury or death to you or someone nearby. At the very least, such thoughtless abuse of your gun will likely damage it.



Field Dressing

Field dressing is the procedure performed by a hunter to remove the entrails and skin from his game to prevent the meat and hide from spoiling.

Big Game

Equipment

Initially, you will require a hunting knife and sharpening stone to dress a big-game animal. In addition, an axe or small meat saw, nylon rope (30 ft.—9m), cheesecloth, twine and some hunter orange flagging material will be useful. Black pepper will help keep flies away from the meat after dressing and salt will help preserve the hide from spoilage.

Dressing

First, you must decide whether the cape of the animal is to be used for mounting. If it is, follow the procedure outlined later in this chapter. If the cape is not required, the following method of field dressing is recommended.

Lay the animal on its side or, if possible, on its back. It is not necessary to bleed the animal as sufficient bleeding will occur from the bullet wound and the cuts made to dress the animal.

With a sharp hunting knife, cut through the skin and abdominal wall from the crotch to throat. Be careful not to puncture the intestines or the stomach and avoid getting



hair in the body cavity. Split the breastbone with your knife or axe. Loosen the organs in the body cavity by cutting all connecting tissue including the diaphragm. Cut carefully around the vent in the rump—be careful not to puncture the intestine. Loosen the intestine enough to pull it out after tying the vent closed with a piece of string. This will prevent body wastes in the intestine from spilling onto the meat when you remove the entrails.

Now with the carcass on its side, turn its head uphill. Cut the windpipe free at the throat. Hold the windpipe in one hand and pull backward. With the other hand, free any internal organs by cutting through the tissue attaching them to the animal. Strip all the entrails from the body cavity. Recover the liver and heart if desired. Prop the chest cavity open by spreading the ribcage apart with a stick. With a dry clean cloth, wipe blood and other waste matter from inside of the carcass. Trim away all damaged parts. If possible, wash the body cavity with water. Be sure to thoroughly dry the body cavity after washing as a dry surface will help check spoilage of the meat.

Skinning

Antlered or Horned Animals

Game should be skinned as soon as possible after the animal is dead. Skinning is easiest when the carcass is warm.

First, decide if you want to have the head mounted as a trophy. If so, follow the skinning procedure outlined for trophy specimens on page 244. Otherwise, the following skinning procedure is recommended.

Non-Trophy Animals

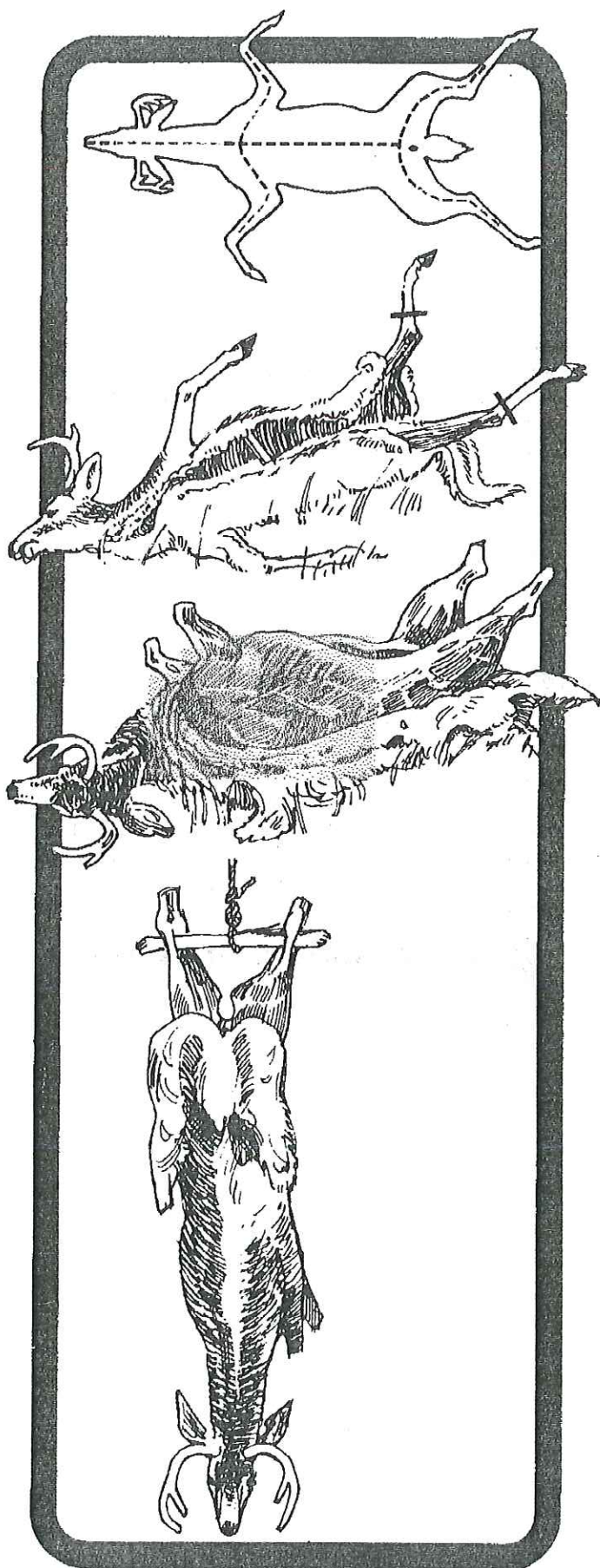
The steps in skinning most big game animals which have antlers or horns are the same.

If possible, hang the animal off the ground upside down; otherwise skin it where it lies. If possible, move it to an area of level ground or to your hunting camp before removing the skin. This will prevent dirt and other debris from getting on the meat while it is being transported.

Cut along the inside of each leg from above the knee joints to the belly incision. Next cut around each leg at the knee. Then cut completely around the neck to join the cut made along the throat when the windpipe was removed.

Cut the meat and tissue around the knee joints to remove the lower legs. Now use your knife carefully to free the skin from the body by cutting the connecting tissue in between. Once the hide has been peeled back from the hind legs, cut through the tail. This will enable you to remove the hide in one piece.

Trim away excess fat and tissue from the hide and salt it to prevent spoilage. The hide can be tanned later to make leather for gloves, jackets and other clothing or it can be donated to others for such use.



Trophy Animals

When skinning an antlered or horned animal for mounting, do not cut the skin of the throat because this will ruin the cape. Start by circling the shoulders. Begin at a point on the back between the shoulder blades and cut down each side to a point behind the front legs. Next, cut a curve over the two front legs to connect with the breast incision. Then make a cut along the back of the neck to a point between the ears and the base of the antlers or horns. Cut from this point to the base of each antler or horn to form a "T" shaped cut on the top of the head.

Now free the hide around the neck and shoulders by pulling the hide away from the body while cutting all the connecting tissue with a knife. At this point, the remaining steps necessary to skin out the head can be greatly simplified by cutting off the animal's head.

To remove the head, cut through the muscle covering the large neck joint immediately behind the skull. Bend the head back to expose the first vertebrae where it joins the skull. Cut as much tissue free around this joint as you can. Then twist the head off.

Once the skull is free, work carefully toward the base of the ears. Skin over the muscle at the base of each ear until yellow cartilage is visible. Cut down and forward through this cartilage to the skull to free the ears. Continue skinning along the head to the base of the antlers or horns. With the point of your knife, cut upward, close to the skull and around the base of the antlers or horns, freeing the skin attached to them as you proceed. Once the skin has been freed and pulled forward, insert the forefinger of your left hand under the rear edge of the eyelid from the outside. Pull taut and cut the tissue between the eyelid and

the bone until the tear duct is reached. Continue skinning close to the bone until you reach the corners of the mouth. Insert your forefingers in the mouth and lift the lips. Sever the cheek muscles about three-quarters of an inch (2 cm) from the corner of the mouth. Skin close to the bone until the lower lip is free, being very careful not to split the lip. Leave the upper lip attached for the time being.

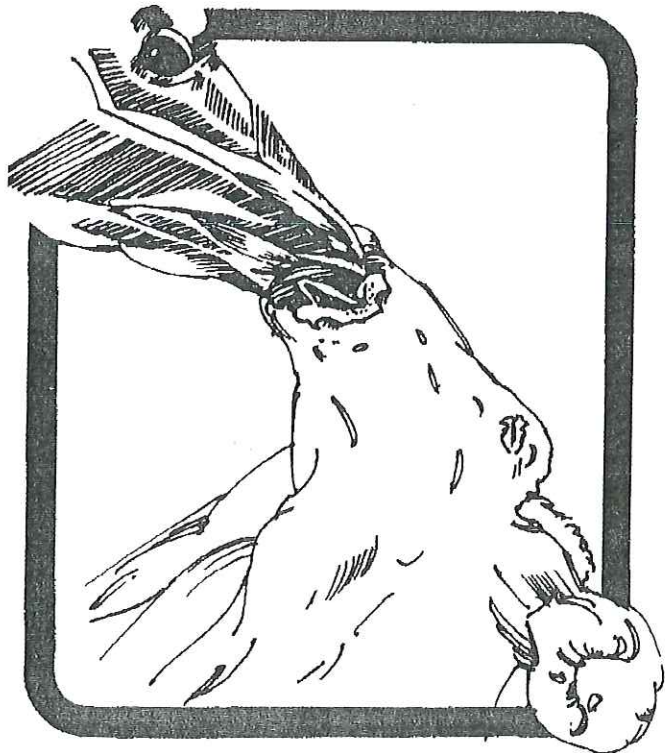
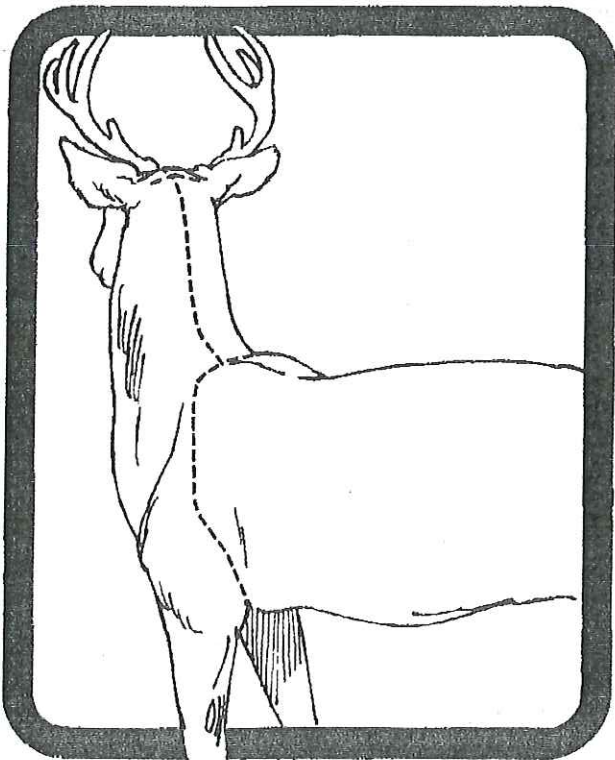
Skin out the muzzle up to the nostrils. Then insert your finger in the nostrils to guide you as you cut through nose cartilage to the bone. Skin close to the bone until the nose and upper lip are free.

Skin out the remainder of the carcass as described for non-trophy animals.

Use a bone saw to cut the top off the skull with the antlers or horns attached. Leave a fairly large portion of skull attached to the antlers for use in mounting your trophy.

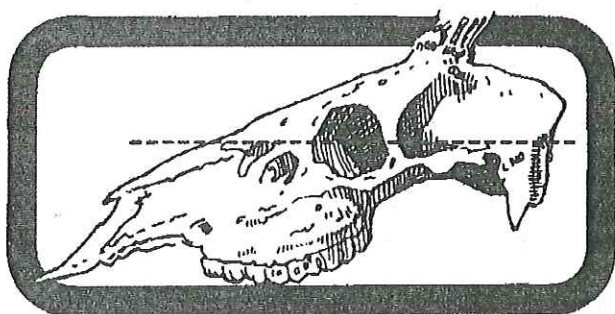
Once the hide is back in camp, finish skinning it out as soon as possible. Open the lips and nose by slitting the fleshy parts from the inside. Remove excess fat and flesh from the hide. Cut away the flesh from the base of the ear cartilage. Separate the skin from the cartilage only at the back of the ear. To do this, cut the tissue connecting the skin to the cartilage, cutting with the knife as necessary and turning the ear inside out as you skin. A long, blunt pointed stick is helpful in turning the ear. Extreme care is necessary while separating the skin from the cartilage or the ear will tear.

Salt your cape thoroughly as described elsewhere in this chapter.



Two Important Points to Remember:

- a) If you're unsure about your ability to skin out a trophy head properly, you can leave the cape intact on the head and neck and have a taxidermist skin it out for a nominal fee.
- b) If you skin a trophy head, be extra careful when cutting around the lips, eyes, ears and nose to avoid cutting through the skin.

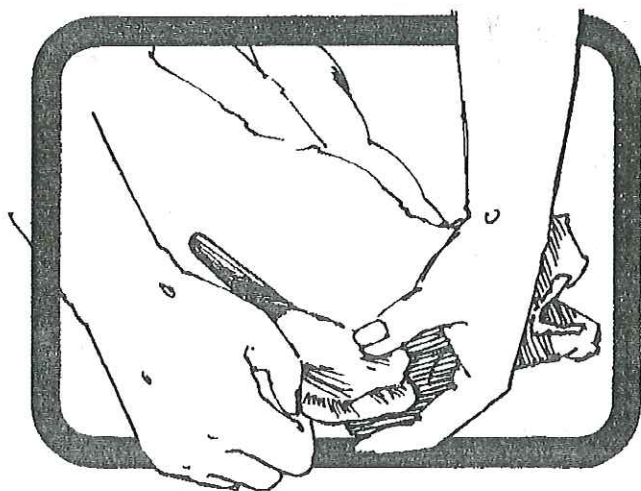


Bears, Wolves, Coyotes, Cougars

To skin a bear, cut from the tip of the tail along the center of the abdomen to within about three inches of the lower lip. Cut the hind legs starting from the inside edge of the pad near the heel along the center of the leg until the cuts meet the incision in the abdomen.

Sever the foot from the carcass, leaving it attached to the hide. Repeat this procedure for the front legs. Now peel the skin off the carcass working from the hind-end forward. Remove the skin around the head in the same fashion as for the antlered animals except avoid cutting the hide on the top of the neck, shoulder and head.

Cougars, coyotes, wolves and similar large animals are skinned like a bear. Open the long tail along the center line on the underside with the tip of a sharp knife. Be careful to cut a straight line—do not zig-zag from side to side. Leave the feet and claws on the pelt, especially if the skin will be used as a rug.

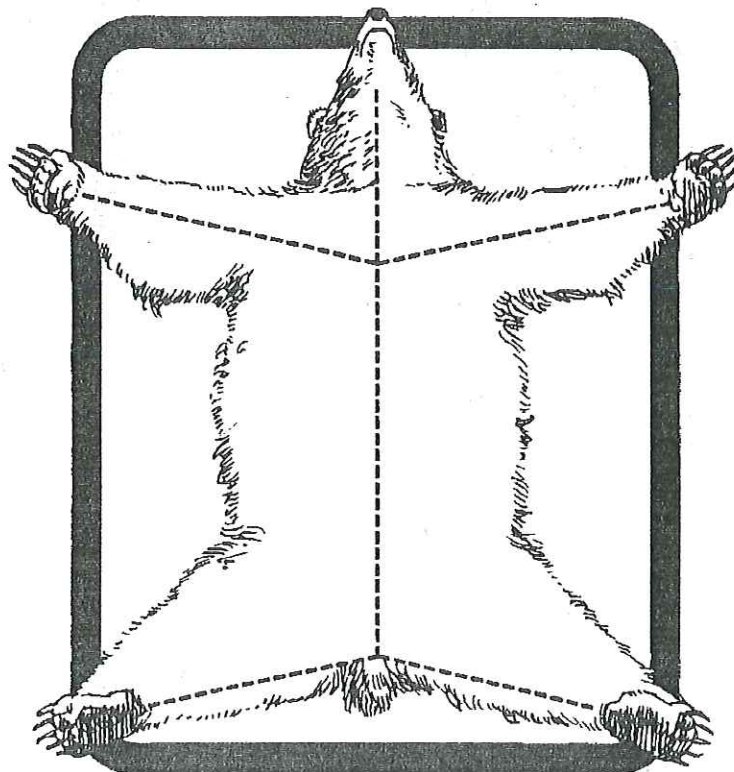


Hanging and Cooling

It is not always possible to skin out big game animals immediately. However, all big game should be kept off the ground after field dressing. The meat on an animal's back is insulated from cool air by its hide and by the ground on which it is lying. Unless it is cooled, it will spoil. The best way to cool the meat is to hang the carcass in a shady, cool place. A block and tackle is the easiest way to hoist a large animal. If this is not available, improvise a winch using nylon rope.

If the animal cannot be hung until later, prop the body cavity open with sticks. Place it belly down over some logs or rocks and cover it with spruce boughs to keep flies and birds away.

In warm weather, black pepper can be sprinkled over the carcass to keep flies off. Once the animal has been skinned, it should be covered with cheese cloth to keep it clean while it cools.



Preserving the Hide

It is essential to salt a hide thoroughly soon after its removal to preserve it for taxidermy purposes. Use common table salt or pickling salt in the amounts indicated in the following table:

| Game species | Amount of salt required | |
|----------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| | Cape Only | Whole hide |
| Antelope | 1 lb. (.4 kg) | 3 lbs. (1.2 kg) |
| Mountain sheep | 2 lbs. (.9 kg) | 4 lbs. (1.8 kg) |
| Deer | 2 lbs. (.9 kg) | 5 lbs. (2.2 kg) |
| Caribou | 3 lbs. (1.3 kg) | 8 lbs. (3.6 kg) |
| Elk | 4 lbs. (1.8 kg) | 15 lbs. (6.6 kg) |
| Moose | 5 lbs. (2.2 kg) | 20 lbs. (9.0 kg) |
| Black bear | | 5 lbs. (2.2 kg) |
| Grizzly bear | | 10 lbs. (4.5 kg) |

Lay the hide flat on the ground, fur side down and stretch it to its fullest extent. Sprinkle salt freely and evenly over the entire hide. Rub the salt vigorously into the skin with the flat of your hand. Be certain the edges of the skin are thoroughly salted. Work salt into the lips, ears, nose and other difficult areas to ensure it covers them completely.

Salt draws the moisture out of the hide. After leaving the salted hide exposed to the air for 24 hours or more, sprinkle salt lightly over the hide once more. Then fold it up towards the skin side. Keep it cool until it is delivered to the taxidermist. Don't place it in a plastic bag or closed container while transporting it.

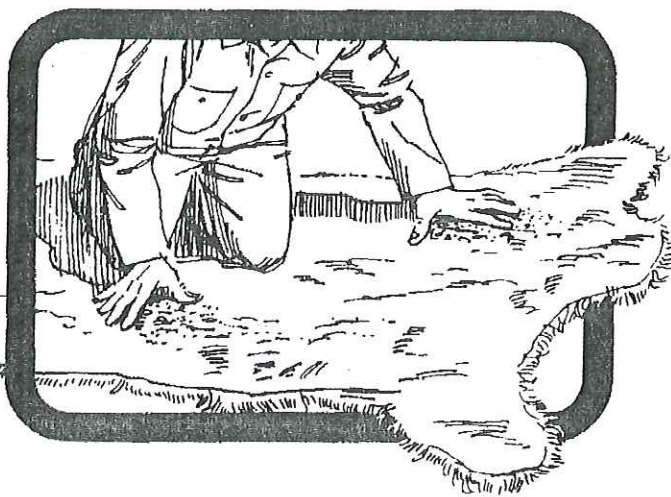
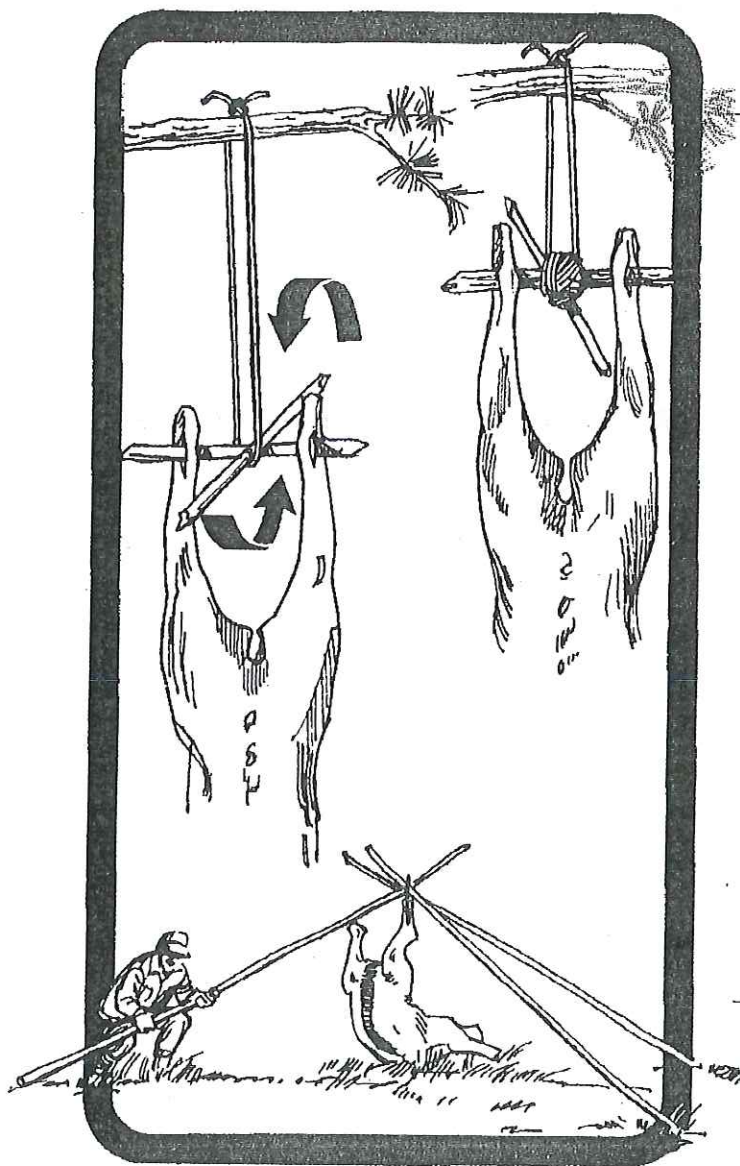
The feet should be skinned out to the last joint of the toes and the bones disconnected. Cut away all fatty tissue. Use plenty of salt and rub it in well. If there appears to be an excessive amount of grease, rub wood ashes into the greasy areas to absorb it.

Salting a skin is always preferable to stretching and air drying it. Only when salt is not available should you cure a skin by stretching it in a frame or pegging it on the ground. Pegging will leave holes in a skin's edges which must be trimmed away, wasting part of the skin.

Even though a skin may be stretched larger than its original size, it will revert to its normal size when tanned. After curing, treating and tanning is complete, a skin that has been stretched and air dried will probably be smaller than if it had been salt cured.

Transporting

If you are backpacking game from field to camp, tie hunter orange flagging on your packsack. If the animals have antlers or horns, tie hunter orange flagging around them as well so you will not be mistaken for an animal by other hunters. A bell tied to your pack-frame will also help others recognize you as a hunter returning from the field.



To prevent damaging the hide, do not drag game along the ground or roll it downhill. If a animal must be dragged, lay it on a blanket or coat, or put a layer of brush or boughs underneath the animal. Pull the animal along by its head.

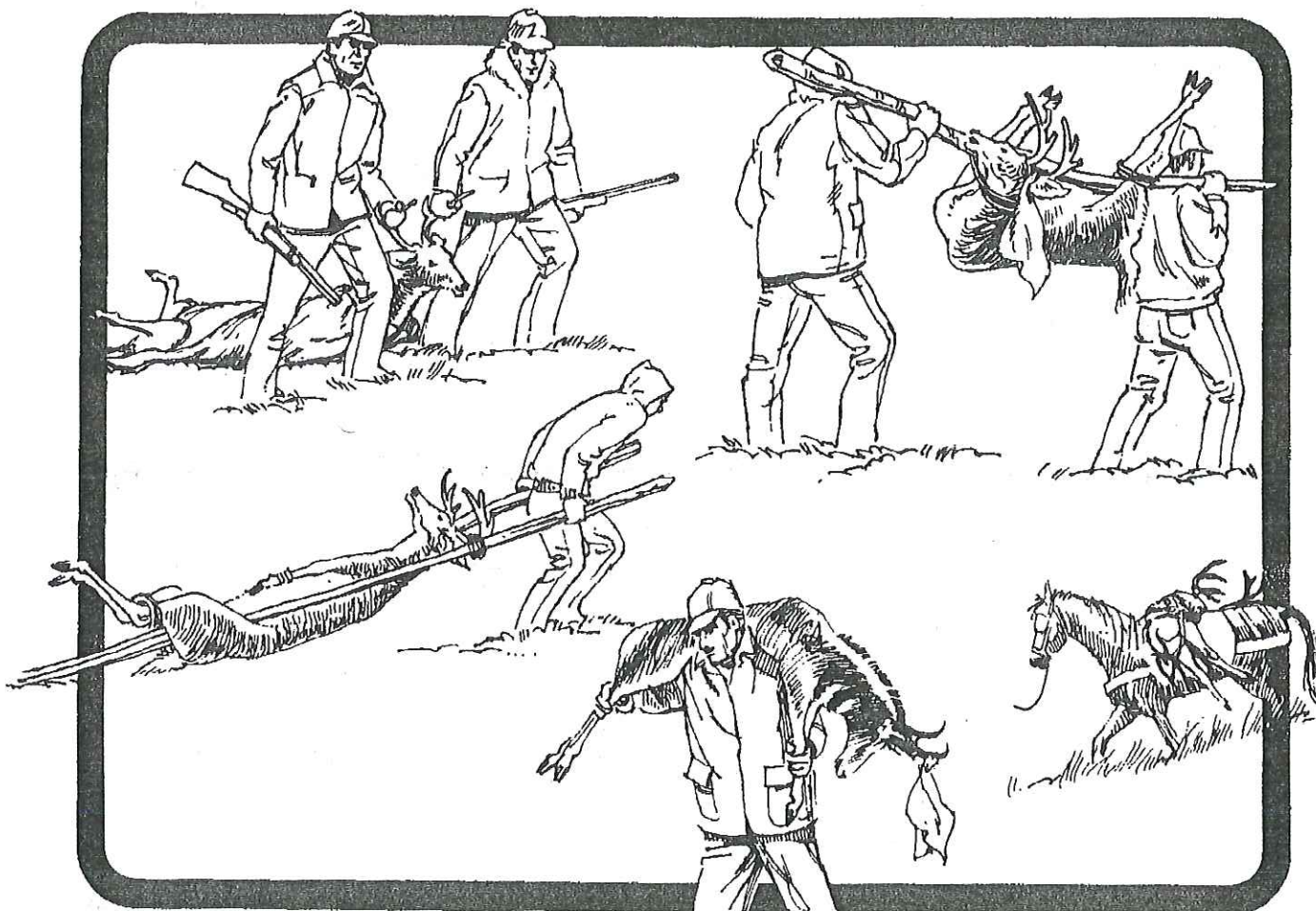
When carrying an animal or hide on horseback, be careful that ropes used to hold it in place do not rub the skin and damage the hide. A blanket, cloth or layers of grass placed between the ropes and hide will prevent damage.

A burlap bag is useful for carrying a hide or meat from field to camp.

When transporting game by vehicle, be sure to keep the carcass away from engine heat, gasoline, sunlight and road dust to prevent its spoilage.

Butchering

The most effective way to cut up your game is to have it done commercially at a butcher shop. For a reasonable charge, they will cut, wrap and freeze your meat with minimum waste. If you choose to butcher your game yourself, meat cutting guides are available at many bookstores.



Game Birds

Game birds should be field dressed as soon as possible. Be sure to retain evidence of the bird's sex and species—one wing with feathers intact must be attached to each migratory or upland game bird in your bag.

Skinning, Plucking and Cleaning

Some hunters prefer to pluck game birds rather than skin them. If you plan to pluck your birds, do it at a place which is acceptable to the landowner. Upland game birds should be plucked as quickly as possible. Ten minutes after they are dead, their feathers will be set firmly and they will be difficult to remove without tearing the skin. Waterfowl should be rough plucked in the field as well. This makes the final plucking at home much easier. Then clean immediately.

The easiest way to clean a grouse is, with the bird held breast upward, cut through the belly skin at the base of the breast and cut around the bottom margin of the breast. Then bend the bird backwards. This will open the incision. The innards can now be removed easily.

If the weather is cool, you may use a different method of field dressing game birds. Cut behind the breast to one side of the vent. Insert your fingers and draw out the

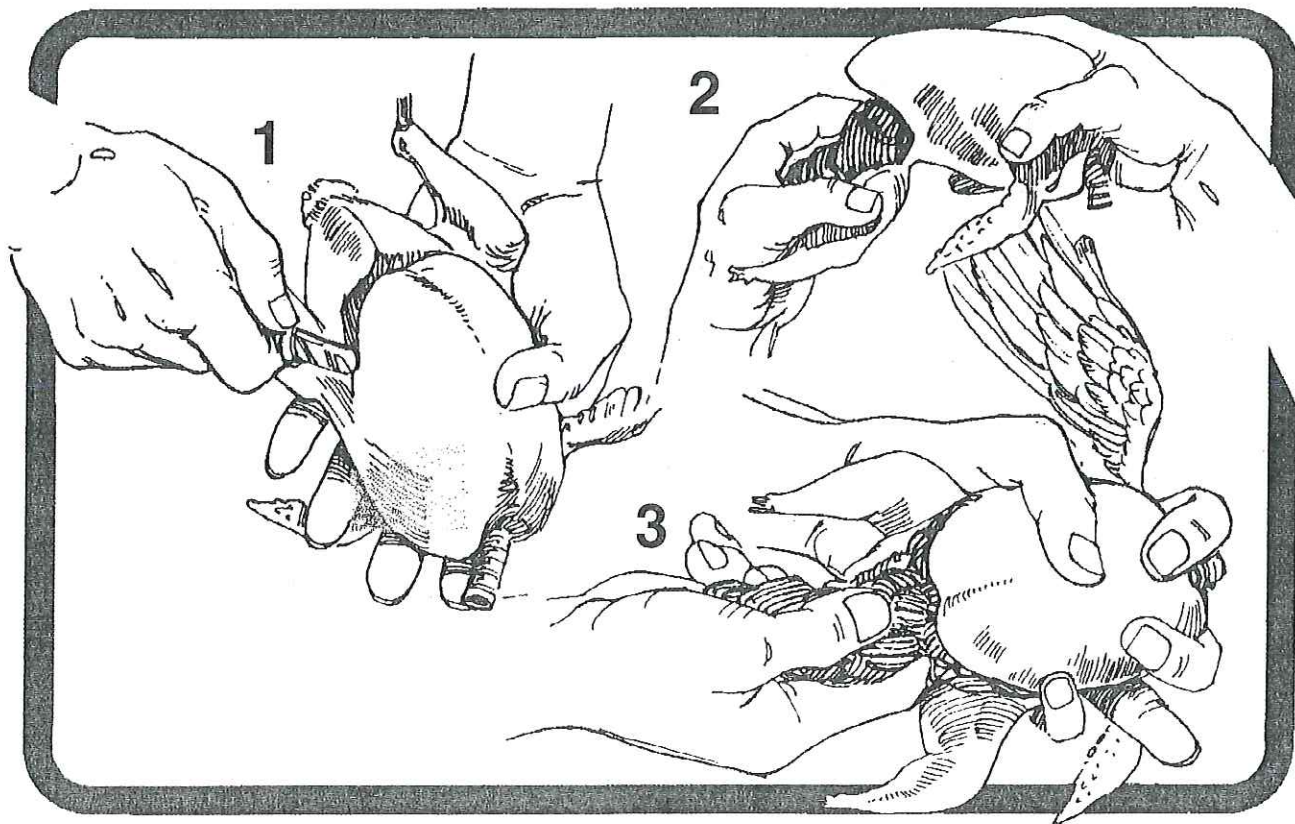
innards. In warm weather, the opening may have to be enlarged to cool the bird enough to avoid spoiling.

Be certain to dry game birds well after cleaning. A roll of paper towels is useful for cleaning out and drying the body cavity after innards have been removed.

Once home, one technique to simplify the removal of down and pin feathers from waterfowl is scalding the birds in hot paraffin wax. First melt three cakes of paraffin wax in six quarts (5.71) of hot water (185° F, 67° C). After removing the wings, dunk the birds, one at a time, into the hot wax mixture. When cooled, the wax can be peeled off, removing pin feathers and down and any feathers remaining after rough plucking.

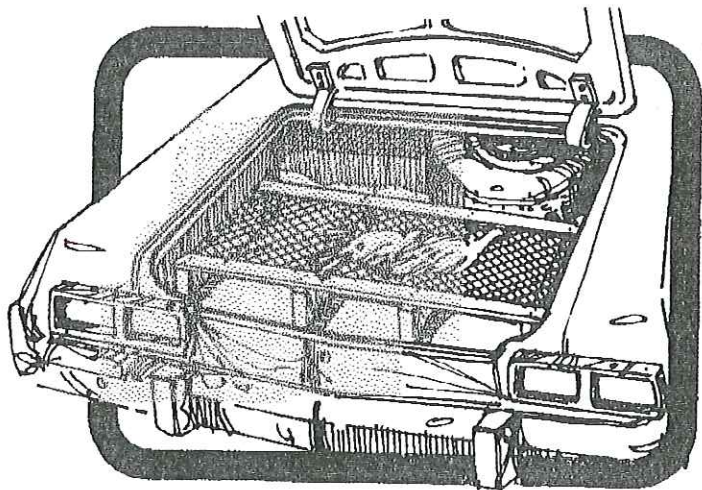
After plucking, some long hair-like feathers may remain on the bird. These may be burned off with a lighted match. Do not use burning newspaper because the ink from the newsprint could taint the meat. A butane torch is useful for this job.

Skinning a game bird is easier than plucking and it need not be done immediately. When you have returned home, you can skin the bird with less chance of dirt contaminating the meat.



Cooling and Transportation

Birds must be quickly cooled or their meat will spoil. Do not pile birds together in a bag or box. Spread the birds out so air can circulate between them. They are best carried on a wire rack or game carrier which allows good air circulation around them.

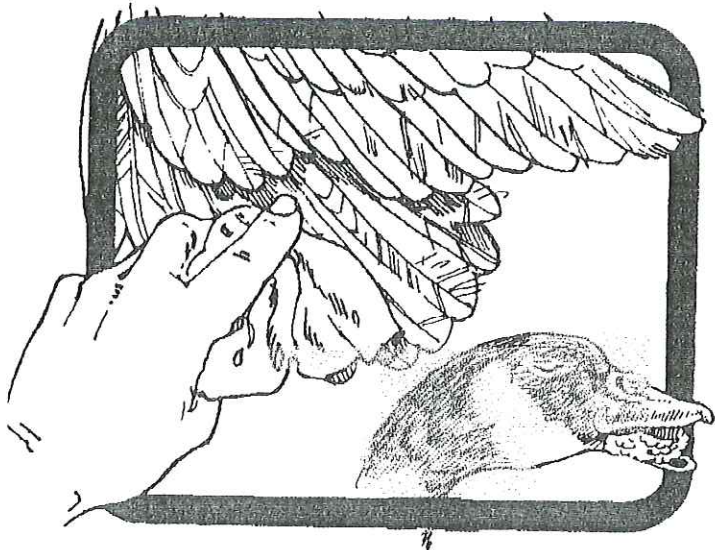


Some hunters prefer hanging their birds two to three days to cure them before freezing. Others freeze their birds immediately after cleaning and washing them. If birds are heavily shot up, soak them overnight in a salt solution to remove blood clotted around the wounds before freezing them for storage.

Care of Trophy Birds

If you plan to have a taxidermist mount a trophy bird for display, follow this procedure.

Immediately after retrieving your game bird, wipe any blood off its feathers using a clean cloth. Dab the cloth lightly in water if necessary to remove stubborn stains. Do not rough up the feathers but wipe in the direction they lie. Stuff cotton batting in the bird's mouth and nostrils to prevent further bleeding.



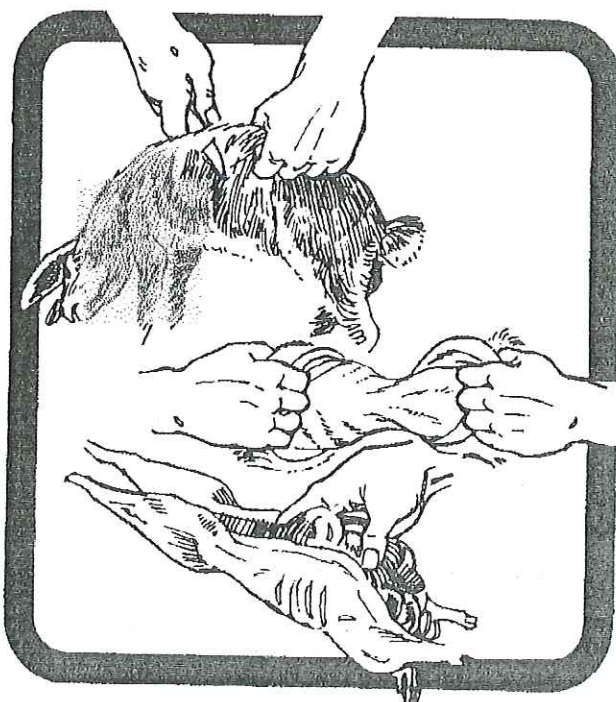
If your car is nearby, lay the bird on clean paper in a place where it will not be disturbed. Be sure to smooth out the feathers before laying it down. If the car is not accessible, the bird can be rolled in a cone of newspapers or a paper bag and carried with its head down. If it is not carried head down, blood could drain through the nostrils and beak and stain the feathers.

Do not dress any bird you intend to take to a taxidermist.

Do not wrap your trophy bird in a plastic bag when taking it home as it will retain its body heat and spoil. Once home, double check to ensure all feathers are correctly positioned and smooth. Wrap it in paper or a plastic bag and freeze it solidly. Keep it frozen for delivery to the taxidermist as he will likely have to store it for several weeks before mounting it.

Rabbits

To field dress a rabbit, cut off its head and remove its feet at the ankle joint. Pinch the loose skin on its back between your fingers and insert your knife through the skin, cutting across the back. Now grasp the hide on both sides of the cut and pull it away in opposite directions. Peel the hide completely off and remove the tail. Cut the abdomen open and remove the entrails. Trim away any shot-damaged meat, wash the carcass and wipe it dry to prevent spoilage. Keep it cool while transporting it home.



Notes

