

MDC Encourages Deer Hunters to Share the Harvest

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages deer hunters around the state to share their harvest through the state's Share the Harvest program. Administered by MDC and the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), Share the Harvest coordinates the efforts of thousands of deer hunters, about 100 participating meat processors, numerous local supporting organizations, and a handful of statewide sponsors.

The program works by deer hunters donating their extra venison -- from several pounds to whole deer -- to participating meat processors throughout the state who grind and package the deer meat. The packaged venison is then given to food banks and food pantries for distribution to Missourians in need of food assistance.

Processing fees are covered entirely or in part by numerous local sponsors, along with statewide sponsors that include: MDC, CFM, Shelter Insurance, Bass Pro Shops, Gateway Area Chapter of Safari Club International, Missouri Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Midway USA Inc., and the Missouri Food Banks Association.

Funds are available to help with processing costs when a whole deer is donated during all portions of the archery and firearms deer seasons. The Conservation Federation of Missouri reimburses processors a pre-determined amount for each whole deer donated. This allows processors to reduce processing fees to hunters. In addition, many processors have local funds available that allow deer to be processed for free or at a reduced cost. Hunters should contact individual processors to determine what funds are available. The cost of processing is the hunter's responsibility when funds to help cover the full cost are not available.

More than 4,500 deer hunters donated more than a quarter-million pounds of venison from last season's deer harvest. Since the program was started in 1992, Share the Harvest has provided more than 3.5 million pounds of lean, healthy venison to help feed hungry Missourians.

Find participating processors in the MDC "2016 Fall Deer & Turkey Hunting Regulations and Information" booklet available where permits are sold, online at huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/deer/deer-share-harvest, or by calling MDC at 573-751-4115 or the Conservation Federation of Missouri at 573-634-2322.