



1. After making his initial cuts, Kevin Taylor works on separating layers of the animal's fat and connective tissue.
2. Field dressing includes creating space as you cut to avoid making cuts into the stomach.

Workshop teaches animal field dressing

Photos by Ken Levy

3. Len Carlman of the Teton Science School uses a Wyoming saw to cut through the pelvis of the steer, using extra care not to nick the stomach directly above the blade's stroke.

4. Kevin Taylor and participants in the Sustainable Living workshop prepare to remove the internal organs of a 450-pound steer.

5. The stomach and internal organs are removed from the animal.





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6. The stomach and internal organs are removed from the animal.

7. Participants in Saturday's Sustainable Living workshop on animal field dressing at Snowdrift Farms in Victor skin and clean a 450-pound steer.



Field dressing workshop stresses 'respect and reverence'

Ken Levy
TVN Staff

Don't puncture the stomach.

That was the first warning given by Kevin Taylor, a board member of Full Circle Education, who trained about 10 hunters and others in the art of field dressing an animal in the wild during an FCE Sustainable Living Workshop at Snowdrift Farms Saturday.

The hands- and knives-on demonstration was performed on a freshly-killed 1-1/2 year-old steer weighing between 450-500 pounds.

"The worst thing you can do in this process is put your knife into the stomach contents," he said. "If it happens, you just try to keep the contents from contacting the meat, because it will definitely make it taste funky for sure."

If you poke the stomach you'll know it, he said, because "you'll just get totally gassed with methane and other digestive gasses."

He finds the animal's sternum, above the stomach, and begins his cuts by separating layers of fat and connective tissues. As he cuts, he pulls the abdominal wall and keeps it up and separate so it isn't broken. It's more about separating the layers and gently cutting, and pulling pressure is applied to keep the layers and the cutting away from the stomach.

The goal in field dressing an animal, which involves removing the stomach and all internal organs to expose the meat, is to get the meat's temperature down as quickly as possible.

Taylor said meat could taste gamey if the temperature isn't allowed to drop quickly on the meat.

A steer has much more connective



Kevin Taylor

tissue than elk or deer, said Taylor, requiring more work than either animal to separate the internal organs from the rest of the body.

Don't rush the process, he warns. You'll need about 3-3.5 hours to dress, skin and quarter an animal and have it ready to pack out.

Some hunters choose to not to get into the guts at all, preferring to skin the animal and take off the legs and back straps, or loin, "but when you don't open the animal up, you leave a lot of meat behind. There's a lot of rib meat, there's the tenderloin that's on the inside along the spine."

Internal organs account for 35-40 percent of the animal's weight, Taylor said.

When the internal organs are removed the animal is skinned and quartered. Lines are sliced along the legs and connective tissues, and peeled back to remove the hide. Care is taken to poke no holes in the hide, especially if it is to be tanned.

Taylor brings a spiritual perspective to hunting and dressing animals.

"Everything we do here will be with a great deal of respect and reverence," he said. "This is a time of being thankful and apologetic, but also of being celebratory."

Taylor said nothing he does brings him greater sorrow than having to kill a wild and beautiful animal, and that nothing brings him greater joy than to have meat that doesn't contain hormones or antibiotics and doesn't require a lot of fossil fuels to obtain.

With a greater understanding of where meat and other foods come from comes the likelihood that people will be more likely to use resources conservatively and avoid waste, said Taylor.