The general rule is that all animal products – meat, poultry, eggs, etc. – donated to an Emergency Food Organization (EFO) must meet the same standards as animal products sold in a retail store. There are a few exceptions to this rule for some lower risk foods. Donors and EFOs can take steps to help assure that a well-intended contribution can be safely delivered to people in need. This guide addresses donations for wild game: waterfowl, upland game birds, deer and elk.

WAC 246-215-09415 allows for EFOs to receive donations of wild game by a licensed hunter or police officer. This is a process that is more common in rural counties, but legal in each county across Washington.

Hunters need to think about making a donation of meat before going out to hunt because EFOs cannot accept the meat without some assurance that it has been properly handled. Before heading out to the fields or woods, hunters should contact their local health jurisdiction to discuss an acceptable process for dressing and transporting harvested game to an approved meat cutter or processor.

Anyone possessing wild game killed by someone else must have a signed, written statement identifying the person who harvested the game; the license, the permit or tag number; the number and kind of animal provided; the date killed; the county and area where it was taken; and the hunter’s signature. Must be processed by an approved county inspected meat cutter.

WAC 246-215-09415 states that all donated meat must include: Product name; wild game identification; processor name; processor’s address, any and all allergen information; and instructions to cook the meat to least 165°F.

Meat must be transported in a frozen or chilled container at a temperature of 35°F or lower. All meat must remain refrigerated or frozen. Refrigerated meat should be distributed or used within 3-5 days, frozen meat may be kept in the freezer between 4-12 months.
A Note About the Good Samaritan Donation Act

RCW 69.80.031 offers food donors protection from criminal and civil liability. The act, however, is not a “get-out-of-jail-free” card relieving donors and EFOs of the duty of acting responsibly. The act requires that the donated food be “apparently wholesome.” Animal products can look just fine but still carry E. coli, salmonella or other disease. Therefore, verifying whether animal products are, in fact, “apparently wholesome” requires knowing whether the food has been handled in accordance with suitable food safety standards.