MAINE

MOOSE HUNTER'S GUIDE

BEFORE YOU GO

Review all Maine's hunting laws. Download a PDF copy of Maine Hunting Laws and this book at **mefishwildlife.com/moosehunt.**

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CHECK OUT GOOGLE EARTH

If you're computer-savvy, you can use Google earth to find young cuts and twitch roads/winter roads to access some of the best moose hunting areas.

Tips For a Successful Moose Hunt

You are about to experience what many consider to be a once in a lifetime opportunity – moose hunting in Maine! As a permittee you are guaranteed the opportunity to hunt Maine's largest mammal. You are not guaranteed a successful hunt, a mature "trophy" bull, or quality meat. A Maine moose hunt requires proper planning, scouting, gear, and hard work.

Plan Your Hunt

Unless you live within the Wildlife Management District (WMD) where you will hunt, you'll need to do some planning to make your moose hunt both successful and enjoyable. Specifically, you'll want to:

Do Some Strategic Scouting

Prior to your hunt, scout your district for high use areas. Locate recent browsing, pellet groups, rubs, wallows and tracks. If you put your time in scouting a week before the hunt, your chances of success will improve. If you are unable to scout ahead of time, utilize aerial photography, such as what is on Google Earth, to identify areas within your WMD that would likely hold quality moose habitat, and attempt to check those areas out the day before the hunt begins. This will assist you in narrowing down areas of interest ahead of time, and help to improve your chances of success.

Spots to look include:

- **5- to 15-year-old clear cuts** – these are favorite spots for browsing moose
- **Areas with lots of young trees** – look for areas with lots of saplings about the size of your wrist, and some softwoods (such as fir or spruce trees) mixed in for cover.
- **High terrain** – big bulls can often be found in these spots during warmer parts of the day
- **Older, overgrown clear cuts** – these still offer good food and bedding areas for moose
- **On the move** – even after the rut, many bulls are still on the move looking for cows. Moose do not like the heat of the day, so they're more likely to be on the move in the late afternoon or early morning.
- **In the woods/Off the road** – At one time, scouting for moose was as easy as driving the roads and scouting clear-cuts. But today, the number of roadside 5- to 15-year-old clear cuts has decreased, resulting in limited roadside visibility. Plus, increased road traffic has made moose warier and less likely to be found standing out in the open awaiting opportunistic hunters. A better option is to plan your hunt off the beaten path, not unlike how you would hunt white-tailed deer.

Learn the WMD

You are required to hunt in the Wildlife Management District (WMD) your permit is for. Learn the WMD borders by visiting **mefishwildlife.com/wmd**. A Maine Atlas and Gazetteer is a great tool to learn the topography and road network within your selected WMD. Consider highlighting the border of the WMD in your Atlas.

Field Butchering, Packing & Transport Supplies

While many of the same techniques that apply to deer hunting can be translated to moose, there's one major exception - you may find yourself with an animal on the ground weighing nearly 1,000 pounds.

More than likely, you will not be able to drive to where the animal falls, so you will need to carry equipment to field butcher your animal, pack it out, and transport it to a tagging station. Make sure your equipment list includes the following:

- ❑ Game bags or several cotton bed sheets or pillow cases. 1 large bag for each quarter, and 1 bag for neck meat, rib meat, backstraps, and tenderloins, for a total of 5 bags.
- ❑ Whether using a gutless method or gutting the moose-then quartering, a good, sharp hunting knife (drop point 3.5"-5" blades are nice) is essential.
- ❑ Sharpening stone
- ❑ Cloth wiping rags
- ❑ ¼" to ½" nylon rope (at least 100 feet)
- ❑ Sharp axe or hatchet
- ❑ Large sheet of polyethylene or light tarp (to lay meat on while processing)
- ❑ Sturdy hand saw, preferably a boning saw
- ❑ Heavy-duty pulley and/or a winch or come-along (1-ton minimum capacity)
- ❑ Large cooler (keep coolers with ice out of the sun!)
- ❑ Ice – frozen milk jugs are best! Bags of ice will not do the job. Note that ice that has been frozen for longer periods of time lasts **much better** (i.e. won't thaw as quickly) than ice that was formed the night before. Moose hunters should freeze their milk jugs a month or two in advance, if possible.
- ❑ Latex and/or cut resistant gloves
- ❑ Tarps to protect your meat and moose from dust during dry conditions
- ❑ Pack frame and/or plastic game sled (for transporting meat)

Pack Maps & Spare Vehicle Parts

If you're going to be hunting in remote commercial timberlands (and you probably will be), take some precautions to ensure you don't get lost or stranded. Bring sufficient maps of your hunting area, consider a GPS unit with maps, OnX, Huntwise, GoHunt, Garmin Earthmate, or other Hunt applications for smartphones where you can cache your maps. Always pack extra fuel, tow straps, tools, and spare tires for your vehicles and trailers.

Get Some Guidance

Hunters who utilize Maine Guides are typically more successful than those who don't. To view listings of local guides, visit **maineguides.org** or **maineguides.com**.

Consider Booking a Sporting Camp

More than just places to stay, many such camps are located in popular hunting areas, staffed with helpful Mainers, and typically employ or partner with registered Maine Guides. For a directory, visit **mainesportingcamps.com**.

Choose A Hunting Method That Works For You

Moose hunting in Maine is a rare opportunity, so consider making your hunt a traditional hunt off the beaten path! Hunters who plan to "drive the roads" are less likely to harvest a moose than those who get out of their vehicle and into the woods where the moose are. There are many ways to hunt backcountry moose. Here are a few to consider:

Ply the Waterways

With miles of shoreline along lakes and ponds, rivers, and streams throughout the moose hunting districts, water hunts via a canoe can be especially successful, allowing you to slide up quietly on an unsuspecting moose. Floating, when used in conjunction with calling, can be most effective, allowing you to cover greater ground and provide for a wonderful hunting experience. When hunting near water, alternate calling and pouring water to simulate a moose walking and feeding in the water. But keep in mind that shooting a moose in the water can cause enormous difficulties. Some will sink, and all are hard to get ashore.

Walk & Stalk

This is another effective method. Once you have scouted out some moose holding areas, use a DeLorme Maine Atlas and Gazetteer to identify old logging roads or jeep trails that are no longer traveled – these make ideal paths for stalking. Slowly walk the road, stopping every so often to call, then wait. Be sure to stop in places where there is cover (patch of alders, behind a tree, etc.), avoid stopping in the middle of the road where there is no cover. Be patient – many hunters will wait for 20-30 minutes before proceeding, patience often pays off.

Build a Blind

If you have found a prime area that moose frequently visit, you may consider building a blind or a series of blinds over a wide area using downed trees and available brush. You may want to build a morning blind and an afternoon blind. Pick out a spot with good visibility that allows for comfortable, quiet sitting. Calling is optional, but can be very effective. Attracting scents such as a cow in heat and bull urine, scent sticks, and scented gels can help draw animals within range of your blind. These work especially well if applied the night before you plan to sit. Be sure to disassemble at the end of the week.

Sit in a Stand

Hunting from a tree stand provides an added advantage over a blind by increasing your visibility and getting your scent off the ground. Again, calling is effective, but sitting quietly works well if you're hunting an active trail. Remember to refresh yourself on the laws applying to the use of tree stands.

Always be mindful of wind direction! Whether you are walking and stalking or hunting from a tree stand or blind, it is essential you hunt with the wind in your face, and not in the direction that you are looking or expecting to see an animal from. This not only prevents an animal from smelling the hunter, but also minimizes the chance that the animal will hear them, too.

Moose Calls

During the rut, both cow and bull moose respond to a variety of calls. Cows will respond to cow calls, looking for companions, as will bulls looking to mate. If you plan to call, you first need to select a call and practice. It is especially effective to practice on real moose during your pre-hunt scouting.

- First, consider using one of many commercially produced calls. These calls are well designed and have been extensively tested. When used by a hunter who has practiced, they deliver the right sound.
- If you desire a more traditional call, construct a "bull horn" from birch bark, much the same as the Native Americans did.
- Another form of a "bull horn" is to use a large coffee can. Put a small hole in the center of the bottom and soak a 24-inch rawhide string in water overnight. Feed the rawhide through the bottom of the can, securing with a knot. By pulling the string through your fingers at varying rates you can easily simulate the desired moose call.
- "Bull horn" type calls can be heard over long distances even on windy days. However, hearing a responding call on a windy day can be quite difficult.
- Another call is the hand call. To do this, cup both your hands together, and bring them to your mouth. You can simulate both the cow in heat call and bull grunts.

Distinguishing Bulls, Cows + Calves

This may seem obvious, antlers vs no antlers, but knowing the different physical characteristics between bulls and cows will help ensure your target and increase efficiency. In the thick woods of Maine, it is more common to see parts of a moose than the whole! Honing your observation skills for the hunt is a key but often overlooked ingredient to success.

BULLS

1. The face of a bull is **bicolor;** that means it has a dark muzzle that contrasts with a brown face.
2. The hind end of a bull will be **dark with no vulva patch.**
3. The dewlap or bell of a bull, especially as they grow older will tend towards a **disk shape** and may or may not have a rope attached below the disk.
4. And of course, usually have antlers

COWS

1. The face of a cow is typically **uniform in color** and can be light tan or brown.
2. All cows have a **white vulva patch** below the tail. 99% of bulls do not.
3. The dewlap or bell tends to be small and rope-like.

DON'T SHOOT!
You may kill both animals. This image is intended to show size comparison and behavior.

CALVES

The majority of the time a calf will be with or near a cow, especially when spooked.

1. Calves have a **short snout** relative to adults and can be readily distinguished when side by side.
2. The **body of a calf appears square,** while adult moose are rectangular.
3. Behavioral cues are important when you see a big moose and a small moose but cannot readily determine sex and age. When alert and responding to movement from hunters or other disturbance, calves **will typically shadow the cow and when stopped may touch snout to snout with cow.** By October calves will typically be close to 400 pounds.
4. Male calves which qualify as antlerless moose have small bumps (pedicels) on either side of their ears but no hardened antlers

Photos by Tori Lee Jackson and Ron Logan.

Target, sex/age identification is critical to a moose hunt, specifically with the subpermittee system! Even in the thick Maine woods it remains critical to use binoculars to identify target and remain on the same page and in direct communication with the subpermittee. Since cow-calf pairs travel together and the limit is one moose per hunter it remains imperative to identify your target and ensure that you know what is behind the target including another moose! Thus, identification coupled with shot placement is imperative.

By law, an antlerless moose is a moose without antlers. That means an antlerless moose permit allows you to shoot a female moose without antlers, a female calf, or a male calf moose without antlers. Male calves in October/November have small bumps (pedicels) on either side of their ears but no hardened antlers. Yearling bulls can have short spike antlers or branched antlers (these are illegal to harvest during the antlerless and adaptive unit hunt).

Make A Clean, Humane Kill

You should make every effort to make the quickest, most humane kill possible. This requires use of the proper firearm, larger caliber, and the ability to hit vital areas. Moose can be stalked to distances under 100 yards, so try to get as close as possible to the moose to provide the most effective, well placed, and humane shot. Consider using a range finder (ranging the moose is a good job for the subpermittee) to measure the exact distance.

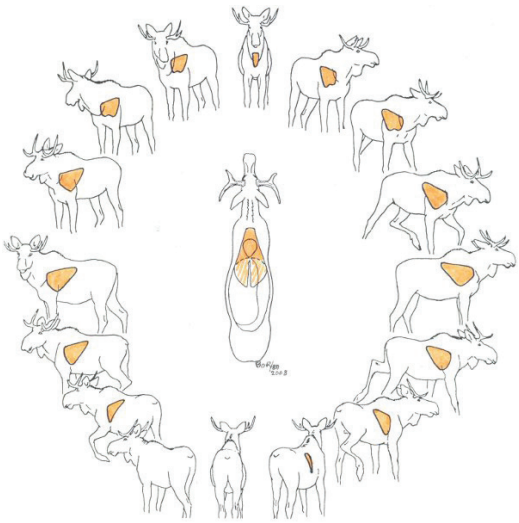
Recommended Cartridges

There are vast options of appropriate firearm calibers and cartridge combinations to swiftly and humanely kill a moose. The most important factor is marksmanship and shot placement. However, it is important to choose a combination that has a bullet weight and terminal ballistics that is powerful enough for moose. Magnum cartridges can help with this, but are not necessary to efficiently kill a moose. It is important to remember that a .17 and .22 caliber rimfires are not legal calibers for moose.

Where to Aim

Placing your shot in a vital area is key to making a clean, ethical, and humane kill. The vital target area of a moose includes the heart and major blood vessels, lungs, and liver. Depending on the angle of the moose, where you need to aim to hit this area changes.
If you are not confident you will hit the vital area, respect the animal and do not shoot. Running shots are never recommended even for the most experienced shooters; the chance of wounding an animal when aiming for the head or rear end is extremely high – don't do it.

The best shot for a quick, humane kill is a broadside shot.



Tracking & Recovery

Moose seldom drop in their tracks when shot and may not show any indications of having been hit (there may not be any blood). Even if vitally hit, the moose may travel 100 yards without a major blood trail. As a hunter, you must make every effort possible to recover that animal. After shooting, it is best to wait a few minutes before beginning the search, and then do so quietly. Pursued immediately, a wounded moose may travel a great distance before dying.

If the moose leaves your sight, mark your area and the last point the moose was seen. Carefully inspect the area for blood and hair. If you find blood or hair, continue that trail. If you don't find blood where you shot the moose or in the last spot you saw the moose, this doesn't mean you didn't hit the moose. You should spend time looking for blood, hair, and/or tracks. Because moose have such large bodies, it often takes a longer time for blood to start dripping on vegetation or the ground and you may not find blood in the trail right away. To ensure you have adequately searched, you should cover several hundred yards before giving up the search. Avoid walking where the moose was to prevent stepping on important sign. You may also want to read additional information about blood sign and what it tells you about the hit. In some situations use of a blood tracking dog may be the best solution.

When You Find the Moose, Approach With Caution

1. **If the moose is standing or moving, ensure this is the same moose** – You can only harvest one moose.
2. **If the moose is laying down, make sure it's dead** – Approach the animal to within 10 feet. Look at its eyes. If they are closed, the animal is probably still alive. If so, kill it with a shot to the base of the ear (if head is not to be mounted). If the eyes are open and the animal is not moving, prod it with a sturdy stick to determine whether it is alive. Always approach the moose from its back side, not in front of its legs, as nerve twitches could cause a leg to kick out.
3. **Rotate the legs** – When you're certain the moose is dead, take each leg separately and straighten it out and rotate it several times. You should do this because, even after death, nerve impulses may cause a leg to strike out suddenly, possibly injuring or even killing the unsuspecting hunter.
4. **Tag it** – Tag the moose with the official transportation tag portion of your moose hunting permit, following instructions on the tag. The full name and address of the person who killed the moose should be written on the transportation tag.
5. **Document it (optional)** – Now is the best time for picture taking, before you field dress.

After the Shot: Field Dressing, Meat Care + Transportation

You just had a successful moose hunt that you enjoyed with family or friends, don't you want to cherish those memories by taking home hundreds of pounds of delicious, wholesome moose meat? Don't spoil your hunt! Be prepared to get your moose out of the woods as efficiently as possible and properly field dress and cool your meat.

Plan for All Facets of Your Moose Hunt

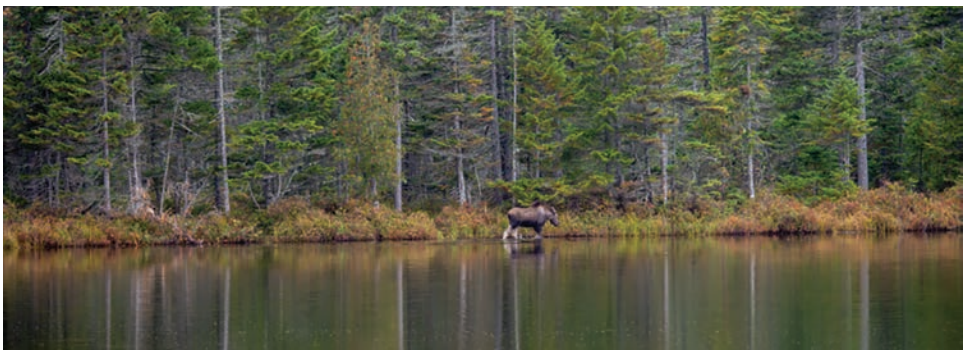
✔ This includes getting moose out of woods, processing moose, and care of meat

- Do not underestimate the challenge of getting a 400-1,000+ pound animal out of the woods – we highly recommend quartering moose to get the moose cooled off as quickly as possible for the highest quality meat
- When scouting an area, keep in mind how you will get your future harvest out of the woods

✔ **Know ahead where you are going to tag/register your moose**

✔ Contact meat cutter/processor ahead of time, preferably in the summer (visit **mefishwildlife.com/moosehunt** to find a list of moose meat processors)

✔ Know where they live, how to get there, and hours of operation



Decide if you will quarter the moose or bring the moose out in its entirety.

For the highest quality moose meat, the Department HIGHLY recommends quartering the moose in the field, especially if the air temperature is 40 degrees or above.

Working fast and efficient is critical because meat starts to spoil above 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The sooner you can get the hide off and start cooling off the moose, the better. In the same amount of time it takes to twitch a whole moose that was harvested a few hundred yards off the road, you can quarter a moose and put the meat in game bags and coolers. Quartering a moose in the field not only saves time, frustration, and often some physical labor, but also gives you the best quality meat possible.

Keeping it cool: Moose are 101 degrees Fahrenheit on the inside, even if the day is cool, the moose is not. To prevent spoilage, the temperature of the meat matters, not the air. At temperatures above 40F meat begins to spoil and when the thermometer hits 70F bacteria double every 20 minutes! For example, at 50F you may have between 3 and 6 hours to get the moose meat completely cooled down to refrigerator temperature (40F). So, removing the hide, parting out the hindquarters, neck meat, rib meat, backstraps, and tenderloins and putting in coolers is critical.

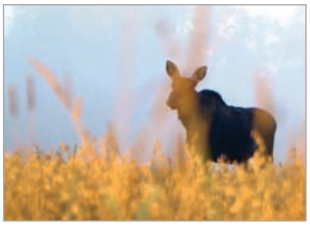
Before going afield, check out our YouTube channel for helpful tips and information.

mefishwildlife
youtube.com/c/mefishwildlife

Quartering a Moose in the Field

Field Dressing a Moose

Locating and collecting Ovaries from Cow Moose



Field Dress the Moose

You must cool off the moose as soon as possible to protect the meat from spoiling, and to ensure the highest quality table fare possible. Immediately field dress the animal.

✔ Warm weather (above 40 degrees), dirt, hair, rumen contents, and urine are your meat spoilage enemies-take field dressing slowly and methodically to preserve the highest quality meat

✔ If a cow, find the ovaries and place in a bag to bring to tagging station (Learn how on page 19-21)

How to Field Dress a Moose Using the Gutless Method

Quartering a Moose in the Field

There are different ways to field dress a big game animal. The method described here is an efficient method that does not require removal of the guts. This technique is particularly useful for larger animals such as moose. However, it should not be used if you intend to leave the animal intact overnight before removing the meat. **This will cause spoilage regardless of outside temperature.** In this case you should gut the animal.

In the field, you'll need these basic field dressing tools:

❑ Sharp knife or two

❑ Bone saw and/or axe

❑ Knife sharpener

❑ Game bags (check the size and quality)

❑ Tarp (helps keep meat clean and dry)

❑ Rope and pulley (for tying off legs, lifting quarters or moving carcass)

❑ Latex and/or cut resistant gloves

❑ Pack frame and/or sled (for transporting meat)

Skinning a Moose

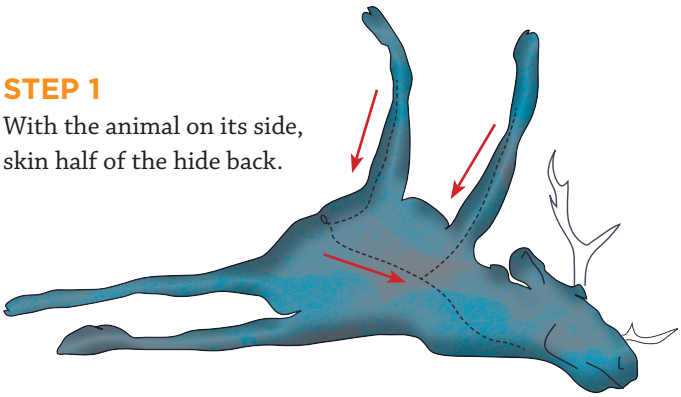
Remember, the first thing you should do after killing a moose is attach your transportation tag. To begin skinning, lift the top, hind leg. Start by cutting around the hock (heel/knee). Continue cutting down along the inside of the animal's leg toward the anus.

Just before reaching the anus, turn your knife and cut along the side of the genitals, leaving them naturally attached to the meat. Continue up the belly along the mid-line toward the chin. Cut around the hock of the front leg, then down the inside of the leg to the existing cut at the mid-line. Skin the hide back to just beyond the backbone. Spread out the hide to make a clean surface for working. Make sure to keep hair away from the meat since moose hair often carries a pungent odor during the rut that can taint the meat's flavor.

Some hunters choose to skin their moose by making the main cut along the mid-line of the back instead of the mid-line of the stomach. This approach reduces the risk of puncturing the gut.

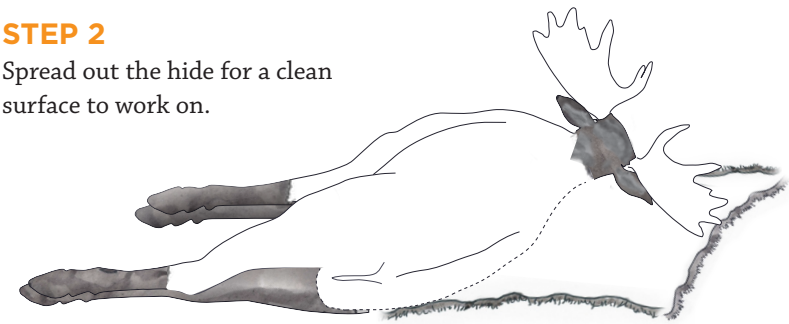
STEP 1

With the animal on its side, skin half of the hide back.



STEP 2

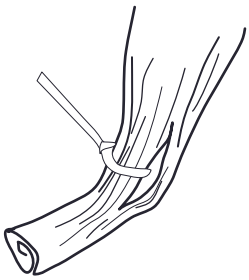
Spread out the hide for a clean surface to work on.



KNOW THE REGULATIONS!

All edible meat, the head, and evidence of sex must be presented for registration. The head is your evidence of sex (Maine Hunting Law Book, page 13.)

Helpful Hints



TYING OFF THE LEGS: If you remove the lower legs, use a bone saw, or knife, to cut them off just below the hock. Make sure to leave the Achilles tendon intact. You can thread a rope through the tendon to tie the legs up. Later this same technique can be used to hang the quarters.

SKINNING TECHNIQUES: When skinning, use short knife strokes. Always move blade from the inside of hide to the outside reducing contamination of meat with hair. Keep your knife at a shallow, 45 degree angle to avoid puncturing the abdomen or other organs.

It is also helpful to use the fingers of your other hand to guide the knife under the skin as you cut. Once you get started, you may be able to use your hands to separate the hide from the underlying muscle.

Cool, Clean & Dry!

Once you remove the meat from the animal, it should be placed in clean, dry game bags and hung in a cool, dry, well-ventilated place. Under these conditions meat can last for longer periods until it can be processed and frozen.

COOL: To reduce spoilage, keep meat cool. Field dress the animal as soon is it is killed and never leave the guts inside the animal overnight.

CLEAN: Clean meat ensures better tasting meat. Trim away blood clots and bloodshot meat. Dirt and hair should be wiped off meat immediately. If intestinal contents touch the meat, the area should be washed with clean water, and then dried immediately (normally you should not wash the carcass; water removes the glaze of blood that helps prevent bacterial growth).

DRY: Allow meat to develop a dry crust on the outside. This reduces spoilage and deters egg-laying insects. Some people also spray meat with citric acid to reduce bacterial growth.

Do not wrap meat in plastic garbage bags, or stack game bags on top of one another. Proper air circulation is essential to keeping meat from spoiling.

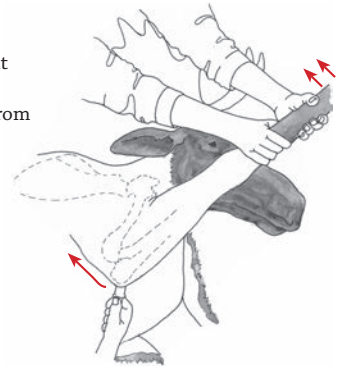
Removing the Meat

FRONT QUARTER

STEP 1

After skinning, lift the front shoulder providing upward tension. Pull the leg away from the body and slice into the armpit. Cut through chest muscle into the loosely attached connective tissue.

To remove the front shoulders you do not have to cut through bone.

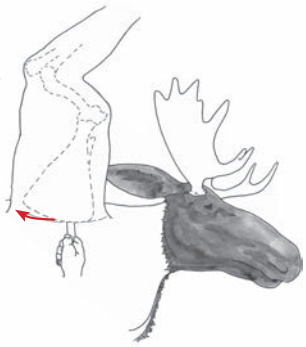


STEP 2

Once the leg is almost detached, locate the top of the shoulder blade. Cut until leg is free.

Cutting as close to the ribs as possible will result in more meat on the front quarter instead of on the ribs.

Place quarter in clean, dry game bag.

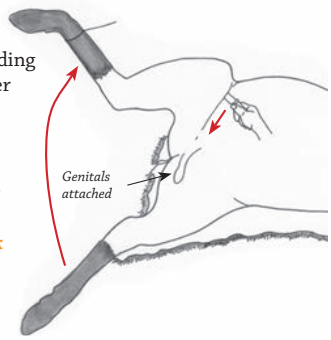


HIND QUARTER

STEP 3

Lift skinned hind leg providing upward tension. From inner thigh work downward. Cut through the loose tissues toward the genitalia.

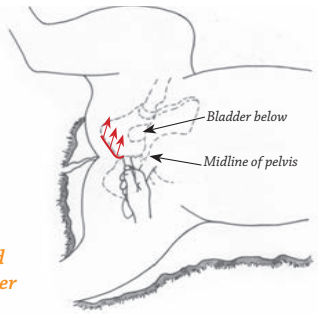
If a bull you can remove the penis and scrotum, if a cow you can cut around the milk sac if evident and remove.



STEP 4

Follow the natural separation between the two leg muscles. Cut until reaching midline of pelvis bone. Turn knife to a shallow angle and fillet muscle off lower pelvis exposing the hip joint.

Keep your knife close to the bone and at an angle to avoid nicking the underlying bladder and intestines.

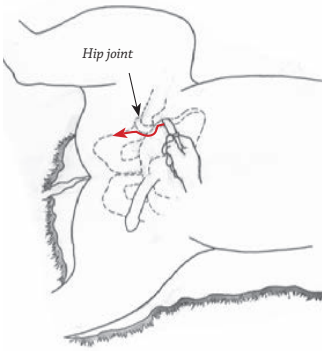


HIND QUARTER

STEP 5

The hip is held together by a ball and socket joint. Cut through the tough ligaments holding this joint in place. Free leg by filleting muscle off top of pelvis following it to the center line of back.

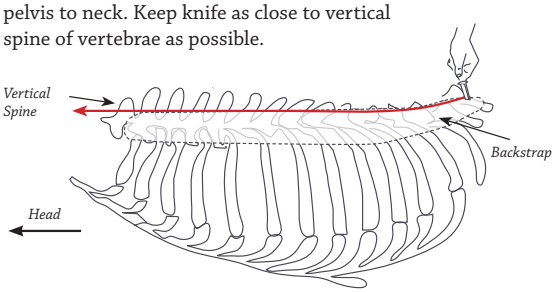
Place quarter in clean, dry game bag.



BACK STRAP

STEP 6

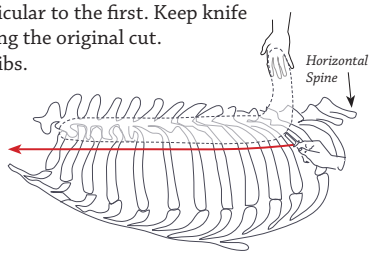
See step 10 illustration for location of backstrap. With knife against the vertical spine, cut from pelvis to neck. Keep knife as close to vertical spine of vertebrae as possible.



STEP 7

Where ribs end, find horizontal spine of vertebrae. Use the tip of the spine as a guide to make a second shallow cut perpendicular to the first. Keep knife at shallow angle facing the original cut. Fillet backstrap off ribs.

Place backstrap in clean, dry game bag.

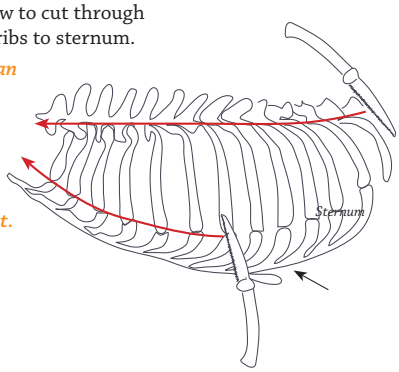


RIBS

STEP 8

Use a knife or saw to detach ribs from spine. Then use a saw to cut through cartilage attaching ribs to sternum.

Alternatively, you can cut rib meat off the bone in some areas (rib meat not required but good option). Liberally trim blood shot meat.

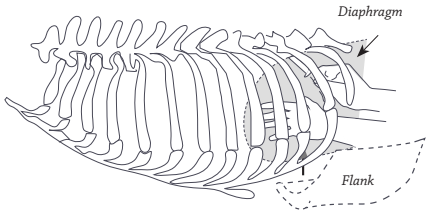


RIBS

STEP 9

The diaphragm muscle is attached to the last rib and separates the abdominal cavity (do not puncture) from the chest cavity. Cut through diaphragm to detach ribs from carcass. Then use knife to remove flank muscle which is found between ribs and rear legs.

Place ribs and flank in game bag with backstrap.

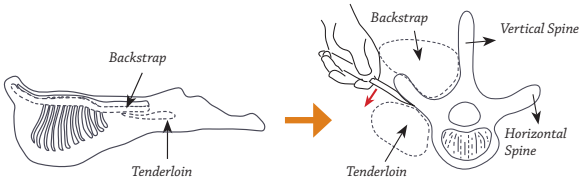


TENDERLOIN

STEP 10

The tenderloins run inside abdominal cavity along backbone down into the hip. Make a shallow cut just under horizontal spine of vertebrae.

Do not puncture intestines.



STEP 11

Once tenderloin is exposed, reach into body cavity, use fingers to work it free from the connective tissue. Cut both ends and remove.

Place tenderloin in game bag with backstrap and ribs.

Although it is possible to leave the guts inside the moose cavity for the entire field dressing process, you may choose to remove the guts at this time. If you do so, prevent spillage of stomach contents and fecal material by tying off trachea, esophagus, and anus before making any cuts.

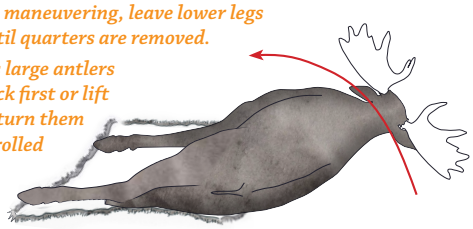
ROLL MOOSE OVER

STEP 12

Use the two remaining legs to roll animal over onto the clean skinned hide exposing the unskinned hide of other side.

To help with maneuvering, leave lower legs attached until quarters are removed.

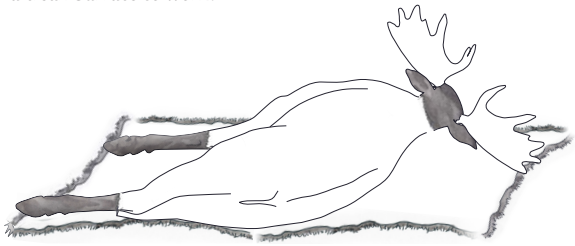
If moose has large antlers sever the neck first or lift antlers and turn them as moose is rolled over.



SKIN OTHER SIDE

STEP 13

Skin exposed side following same procedure as previously described. Spread hide out to provide a clean surface to work.



STEP 14

From the remaining side of animal, remove front and hind quarter, backstrap, tenderloin, and ribs following steps 1-11.

Look over the carcass and use a boning fillet knife to remove any remaining meat from bones.

All edible meat, the head, and evidence of sex must be presented for registration. View additional tagging and registration requirements in the Maine hunting law book.

NECK

STEP 15

Expose neck by skinning hide to the skull just behind ears. Removing neck meat can be difficult, some people remove the entire neck with bone intact. Alternatively, cut along the natural separations between muscles and fillet along bones to remove as much meat as possible.

Place neck meat in clean, dry game bag.

HEAD

STEP 16

Remove the head to bring to registration. See MDIFW Video, ***Moose Hunting in Maine: Quartering a Moose in the Field*** to see demonstration of how to remove the head.

If you harvested a cow, you must then remove the guts (entrails) and locate the ovaries by following steps on page 18-20.

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ATTENTION COW HUNTERS

Don't forget to remove and bring the ovaries to the registration station!

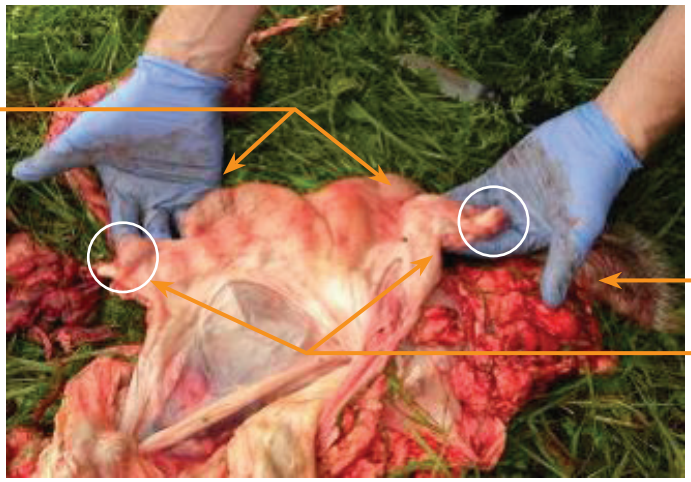
Removing the ovaries from all yearling and older cows is the most important information the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife can get from the moose hunt. Your cooperation in removing these 2 ovaries and presenting them at the registration station is greatly appreciated.

Cow ovaries are the best source of information to determine whether the cow would have 0, 1, or 2 calves the following May. Some cows will not be successful in carrying a calf to full term. The annual feeding on moose by winter ticks, results in loss of body condition in adult cows. The size/weight of an adult cow going into the fall breeding season is critical to her ability to ovulate and carry a fetus through to calving. By examining the cow's ovaries, we have a very strong indication of cow productivity in the region, twinning rates, and age of 1st reproduction. Getting the age, weight, and reproductive status of these cows is vital to the management of moose and allocation of annual moose permits.

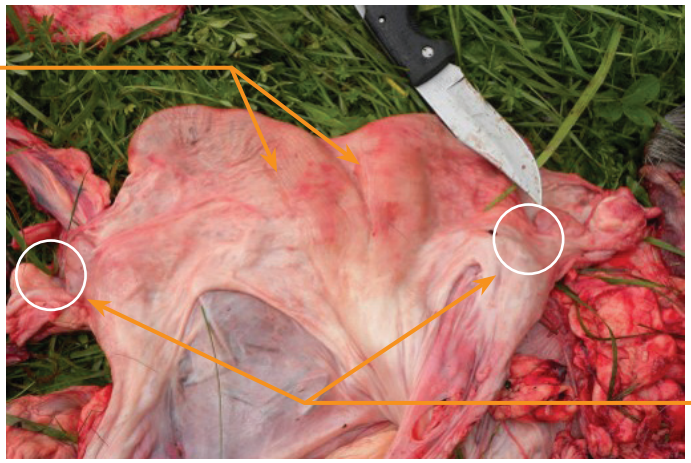
Photo by Tori Lee Jackson

Moose Ovary Collection From Gut Pile

STEP 1: After you field dress the moose, and once the guts are rolled out onto the ground, stretch out the organs so the stomach is at one end and rectum is at other end of pile.



STEP 2: Uterus tissue is elastic and smooth. Here are the uterus and ovaries laid in one's hands.



STEP 3: Ovaries are egg-shaped, and there are two – one at each end of the uterus to the far left and right.

Moose Ovary Collection From Gut Pile Cont.

STEP 4: Here is some round fatty tissue next to the ovary, that may look yellow. Do not confuse this. Note that the inside of the ovary looks like it has dark circles/holes in it.

STEP 5: The knife is pointing to the ovary which should be cut out. Ovaries are less than one inch in length.

STEP 6: Cut out each ovary and store in a bag. Bring to registration station. Thank you!
Reminder: Bring BOTH ovaries!

The previous process helps one locate and remove the ovaries **after** the moose is field dressed. **If you wish to locate the ovaries while field dressing your harvest:**

1. Push the internal organs up towards the chest so you see where two tubes (the rectum and the vagina) exit through the pelvic bone.
2. The vagina is the tube nearest the belly. Grasp this tube and follow it carefully towards the chest until it forks into two tubes, which are the left and right horns of the uterus.
3. Locate the uterus and insert your fingers under it until the organ lies in the palm of your hand. Notice a thin, almost transparent membrane that connects this organ to the animal's back. Carefully follow the horns of the uterus (left and right sides) to the ovaries. These are bean-shaped organs less than 1 inch in length (about the size of a grape) depending on how big the cow is. They may be covered with fat so keep looking! The ovaries will appear more pinkish in color and will be firmer to the touch than fat globules.
4. Cut the membranes holding the ovaries in place then place them in a plastic bag. Both ovaries are needed. If you have any problems the entire uterus can be removed by cutting through the vagina. The ovaries and the uterus can be kept together and cooled until registering your moose.

Transporting Your Moose to the Registration Station + Meat Processor

Once you have field dressed and/or quartered your moose and brought the moose out of the woods, you must register the moose at the closest Moose Registration Station. The person who killed the moose must remain with the animal until it is registered (exceptions can be found in law book). Remember that not all tagging stations register moose, find a moose registration station by visiting **mefishwildlife.com/moosehunt.**

When transporting a moose to the registration station, your main concern should be keeping the meat cool and protecting it from dirt and exhaust fumes. Although Maine law requires that the moose be open to view until after it is registered, the whole animal need not be displayed - only some prominent portion (leg, head, antler, etc.). *Additional Tagging, Transportation, and Registration Laws can be found in the hunting law book.*

Keep it Clean

Dust and mud can make a mess of your moose. Use game bags, cheesecloth or sheets to protect open meat from flies and road dirt, don't pile gear on the moose, and take care to avoid contamination with gasoline from ATVs and spare gas cans. If you transport your moose using a snowmobile trailer, make sure you protect the moose from dirt thrown up by the tires. This is especially important if you will be traveling a long distance on unpaved logging roads.

Keep it Cool

Some hunters rig special insulated boxes in the back of pickup trucks or on snowmobile trailers. Cooled with dry ice, these are great for transporting meat long distances in warm weather. You can also pack ice (bagged or in plastic gallon milk jugs) or dry ice in the body cavity or around the quartered pieces. Just don't allow water from the melting ice to contact the meat (water aids bacterial growth and can speed up spoilage), and don't put dry ice in direct contact with the meat; use several layers of newspaper for separation.

If you can't provide any other kind of cooling, at least allow air to circulate around each piece of meat. You can use a rack of tree limbs to elevate the meat off warm surfaces and separate the pieces on top of each other, but the best approach is to arrange the pieces all in one layer with good air circulation above and below.

If you have a long distance to travel and the weather is warm, don't take your moose directly home – especially if you'll be traveling during the day. Instead, take your moose directly from registration to the nearest facility with a large cooler (a custom meat cutter, a common carrier with refrigerated trucks, a supermarket, etc.) where it can be hung and cooled, butchered, frozen, or properly packed in ice.

Radio Collars and Ear Tags

Any radio collars and ear tags found on harvested moose must be submitted to the agent when the animal is presented for registration. **Please do not cut radio collars.** If necessary, radio collars can be left on the moose until it can be removed by a tagging agent or Department employee.

Moose Meat + Hide Care

Butchering

If you don't have the time, equipment, and know-how to process your own moose, have it processed at a commercial facility. A list of custom cutters who will process moose can be found at the MDIFW Moose Hunting information website: **mefishwildlife.com/moosemeatprocessing**.

TIP: It is best to reserve a spot and let them know your hunt plans as soon as possible to have available space.

How much did my moose weigh? How much meat will I get?

Many successful moose hunters are interested in knowing how much their moose weighed alive and how much edible meat they might expect it to yield. Weighing a moose after it is brought out of the woods (without heart, lungs and other viscera) will give you the dressed weight. Although there are a number of variables (sex, age, blood loss and dehydration, etc.) that may affect weight, a reasonable estimate of a moose's live weight may be obtained by adding 30 percent to its dressed weight. Those same variables also influence meat yield. For instance a large bull will have a higher percentage yield than a young cow, but even more important are shot placement and field care. Meat damaged by the shot, dirty meat, and spoilage all can lead to lost meat if not careful.

In a perfect situation a hunter can expect to get more than 45% of the dressed weight in boned out meat. A more realistic expectation is around 40% of the dressed weight. Remember a lot of things affect the actual amount of meat you will get and many of them are up to you.

When a Moose Yields More Meat than you will Eat…

Consider donating to the Hunters for the Hungry, a program that provides low-fat moose, bear, and deer meat to food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. For more information, please visit **maine.gov/dacf/ard/tefap/hunters_for_hungry.shtml.**

Disposal of Unwanted Parts

Dispose of any waste from your moose by deep burial. Disposal of dead animals or animal parts is illegal on dumps and landfills.

A Caution on Liver & Kidney Consumption

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that the liver and kidneys of moose not be eaten because of possible contamination with the heavy metal cadmium. Several states, Canadian provinces and Scandinavian countries have issued similar warnings. While cadmium may accumulate in the liver and kidneys, there is no known health risk from eating the meat of moose.

Air pollution from copper and nickel industries and from the burning of fossil fuels accounts for much of the cadmium deposited in eastern North America. Cadmium is ingested by moose with their food. Human symptoms of acute cadmium poisoning include severe nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle cramps and salivation.

Parasites & Moose

Hunters should be aware that most wild animals have parasites including moose. Most moose parasites (i.e., muscle worms) do not cause any recognizable disease. And while the presence of parasites may be unsightly, most parasites cannot be transmitted to humans nor do they make the meat inedible. Often the whitish cysts of muscle tapeworm (*Taenia krabbei)* are found when butchering but it does not affect the meat. Muscle tapeworm can either be butchered out or cooked to internal temperature of 165 degrees. As a precaution it is always advisable to wear latex/nitrile or similar glove when field dressing and butchering wild animals.

Tape Worm in Maine Moose (*Echinococcus granulosus*)

Echinococcus granulosus (EG) is a small tapeworm (typically found in the lungs) that has a two part lifecycle; one in canids (coyotes/foxes/domestic dogs) and the second in moose. There are several known genotypes of this tapeworm, and this is the northern, or least pathogenic, form. Although *Echinococcus granulosu* can infect humans, it is also very likely that we have coexisted with these tapeworms for years with no apparent problems. Humans may become infected by eggs of the parasite, which can be picked up by contact with canid feces.

In conjunction with the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention and University of Maine Animal Health Lab/Cooperative extension, we recommend the following: Hunters should avoid harvesting sick or injured animals and always wear rubber or latex gloves when field dressing animals. People should avoid contact with dead animals and contact with carnivore feces. Also consult with your veterinarian to keep your dogs dewormed and do not let dogs eat organs from either hunter-harvested animals or from "roadkill" animals. Practice good personal hygiene, wash hands and contaminated clothes, especially after handling animals or anything that could be contaminated with feces.

Care for Taxidermy of Harvest Moose

If you are considering mounting your harvest, contact your taxidermist for standards of care before your hunt.

Moose Harvest Information

Moose Age

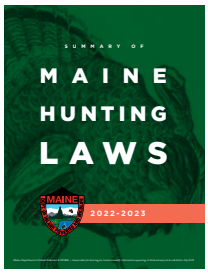
When you register a moose, MDIFW biologists retain one of its teeth (the canine). This tooth can help us determine the moose's age as well as other critical info about the herd. If you're curious how old your moose was, you can look it up by the year of your hunt. If your name is not listed, or no age is listed, either no tooth was submitted, or we were unable to determine the age from the tooth.

Learn more at **mefishwildlife.com/harvestinformation.**

Curious how your moose stacks up, and how Maine's moose harvests are trending year to year?

Bulls lose weight between the September and October seasons due to rutting. The average bull in September will weigh ~715 pounds and in October ~650 pounds. The average bull shot will be ~4.5 years old and antler spreads will be around 35". The average weight of an adult cow will be ~540 pounds.

Check **mefishwildlife.com/harvestinformation** after the hunting season to see the updated stats.



Avoiding Moose Hunting Pitfalls

As a hunter and moose permit holder it is your responsibility to understand and follow all of Maine's hunting laws. Below we have included a few reminders, but before you go, be sure to view all of Maine's hunting laws at mefishwildlife.com/laws.

- **Hunter Orange Requirement** – Anyone who hunts any species with a firearm or crossbow in a Wildlife Management District that is open to moose hunting must wear one article of solid-colored hunter orange clothing (hats count). When moose season overlaps the firearms season on deer, then two pieces must be worn. On youth deer hunting day, and starting the opening day of firearms season on deer for Maine residents, through November, all hunters must wear two articles of orange.

  TIP: Always keep your orange on, even when in the vehicle traveling. This way you do not forget it when you leave the vehicle.

- **Permittee/Subpermittee and the hunting together requirement** – The permittee and subpermittee must physically be in the presence of each other while hunting, without the aid of visual or audio enhancement devices. The permittee may hunt alone, but if the permittee and subpermittee hunt together they must be in contact. The subpermittee may not hunt unless in the presence of the permittee.

  TIP: The subpermittee should ALWAYS be with the permittee. If a moose crosses the road, do not spread out in hopes of finding "the moose" as you may think you are harvesting one moose, and, be looking at two different targets. Direct communication is essential and a requirement by law.

- **Loaded firearms - Riding in bed of truck/trailers** – Rules have changed in the past few years regarding loaded firearms **in and on** motor vehicles. No loaded firearms are allowed in a parked vehicle, moving vehicle, or a vehicle with the engine running. A loaded magazine inserted into a weapon is considered loaded.
  - A person who is hunting may rest a loaded firearm or crossbow that is under their control on the vehicle to shoot only when the vehicle is not in motion and the engine is off.
    Note: *you cannot stand in the bed of a truck and use the roof as your rest spot. Feet must be planted on the ground. It is unlawful to shoot from an observation stand located in the bed of a truck.*

- **Hunter listed on multiple permits** – It is prohibited to hunt/kill more than one moose per year. Once you have killed a moose – you are done hunting moose for that year.

- **How to avoid double kills –** Moose often travel in groups and calves often stand close to a cow. Especially after the breeding season (rut), moose of the same sex will group up together. As a hunter it is your responsibility to be sure of your target and beyond. Before you shoot, always check to make sure there isn't a second moose behind your target.

  One well-placed shot is best. If you must take another shot, always be sure you are shooting at the original moose you shot at to begin with. Take a breath and make sure there aren't two separate moose.

  If you end up having two moose down – do not move the moose. Send someone to call the Maine Warden Service with GPS coordinates of the kill site location. A warden will respond, talk to all involved, look over the scene and many times we can work things out. If a moose is shot and left, and we discover it on our own, and we trace it back to you – there isn't any chance of working things out.

  Warden Service Dispatch:

  Augusta: 1-800-452-4664

  Bangor: 1-800-432-7381

  Houlton: 1-800-924-2261

- **Identify your target** – Hunters need to put effort into checking for antlers. Binoculars and another person looking for the shooter is very helpful when looking for antlers to be sure of a legal harvest. If you end up shooting a moose with antlers and have a cow permit – do not disturb the scene – leave the moose where you shot it and follow steps outlined above. A warden will respond and investigate. We understand that there are factors that make seeing antlers difficult – it's better if we can talk to you about those factors at the scene. If the moose is left and goes to waste, and we investigate and find out it was you, the chances of it ending with prosecution are very good.

  TIP: View page 7 to learn how to identify the differences between a bull, cow, and calf moose beyond just looking for antlers.

- **Learn the WMD boundaries before the hunt –** Hunters must hunt within their assigned Wildlife Management District during their assigned season. Take the time before your hunt starts to become familiar with the boundaries in your zone: **mefishwildlife.com/wmd.**

  TIP: Purchase a Maine Atlas—it is the best way to ensure you know where you are.

  Reminder: There may be areas closed to hunting within your designated Wildlife Management District, including Native American Territory and some State Parks, learn more in the Maine Hunting Law Book.

- **Never block roads** – Hunters will often find their area to hunt in and find it frustrating that other hunters/vehicles keep driving on a road they are actively hunting on. We get multiple complaints about this every year. **Remember, blocking a road is a violation of the law.**

TIP: If you want to hunt a road that is a dead end road, it's acceptable to leave one of your helpers or even a vehicle at the end of the road to let other hunters know that you are hunting that road – without blocking it. MOST hunting parties will know what this means and be respectful and hunt somewhere else. If you leave a person at the end of the road, they can let other vehicles know that there is a hunting party hunting on the road but they cannot block the road or tell other hunters they can't proceed onto that road.

Permit Requirements, Bag Limit + Permit Type

Who May Hunt

Only holders of valid moose hunting permits and their designated subpermittee may hunt moose. The permittee must possess the permit at all times while hunting. Hunters may hunt moose with bow and arrow if they possess an archery license, or they may hunt moose with a firearm if they possess a big game hunting license. Hunters may use a crossbow if they possess either a big game hunting license or an archery license, and a crossbow permit. Hunters may use a muzzleloader if they possess a valid hunting license (no additional muzzleloader permit is needed). The permittee may hunt alone, but the subpermittee must always be in the presence of the permittee while hunting; that presence must be unaided by visual or audio enhancement devices, including binoculars and citizens band radios. Other individuals may be in the hunting party, but only permittees and subpermittees may hunt or kill a moose. A person may assist in a hunt without a license or permit for that activity as long as that person does not carry hunting equipment (firearm, bow and arrow, or crossbow). The "alternate subpermittee" may assist the hunt, but cannot carry hunting equipment unless that individual has been designated the only subpermittee prior to the hunt and notified MDIFW by completing proper paperwork.

Note: *The Saturday preceding the first day of the November Season for WMDs 15 and 16 is open for the hunting of moose by Maine residents only, with a valid permit for those WMDs . If a Maine resident permittee has a nonresident subpermittee, the subpermittee may accompany the permittee on Maine residents only day, but the nonresident subpermittee may not hunt on Maine residents only day. Hunters must hunt during the assigned season printed on their permit.*

Bag Limit

There is a bag limit of 1 moose per permit holder or designated subpermittee, per year. It is unlawful for any person to hunt moose after having killed or registered one during the open season of that calendar year.

Permit Type

- A **bull only permit holder** may shoot one bull moose (a "bull moose" means a moose with antlers).
- A **cow (antlerless only) permit holder** may shoot one antlerless moose. "Antlerless moose" means a moose without antlers -which may be a calf of either sex (5 months old).
- An **any-moose permit holder** may shoot one moose of either sex.

A moose may be shot by either the permittee or the subpermittee.

Permit Requirements

Hunters must have a valid big game resident or nonresident hunting license.
An apprenticeship hunter license cannot be used to meet the licensing requirements for using a moose permit.

Three-Year Waiting Period

Anyone receiving a Maine moose hunting permit must wait three years before being eligible to receive another permit. This requirement affects status as a permit holder only; it does not affect hunters who have been subpermittees, hunters who have harvested a moose as a subpermittee, nor does it prohibit a hunter from being a subpermittee during the three-year wait.

It is illegal to sell a subpermittee or alternate subpermittee designation on a moose permit.

Information related to swapping permits can be found on the Moose Permit page of our website: **mefishwildlife.com/moosepermit**.

Hunter Ethics

Hunting in Maine has been a long-standing tradition; providing opportunity to secure food naturally, become more connected to wildlife, and provide solace from a fast-paced world. The future of Maine's hunting traditions are and will continue to be a reflection of hunter behavior. Your actions as an ethical hunter have the opportunity to improve and enhance positive perspectives from non-hunters, demonstrating the true value of hunting. There is a personal code of ethics that goes beyond legal requirements by respecting landowners, the wildlife resources, and other outdoor users. As you enjoy your hunting experience, please conduct yourself with the highest level of respect in all aspects to ensure Maine's hunting traditions can be viewed positively, ensuring it can persist for years to come.

Respect Maine's Private Landowners

Most of Maine's hunting occurs on private property. After all, more than 94% of Maine's forest land is privately owned. Obtain landowner permission before you hunt and always remember that you are a steward of the land. Treat the property with respect to help ensure future access.

- **Be respectful of logging trucks – they ALWAYS have the right of way:** The majority of moose hunting in Maine takes place within the industrial timberlands of the state. Most of this hunting territory is privately owned, and the roads were privately built for the purpose of managing and moving forest products. Many private landowners generously share their roads with members of the public to provide access for hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching opportunities. Respect their livelihood:
  - **Be alert for log trucks and PULL OVER.** Treat logging trucks with the same respect you'd give to an ambulance or fire truck- pull over and allow them to pass when meeting them or when they approach from behind.
  - **Stay clear!** NEVER leave vehicles in the middle of the road when chasing partridge or moose. Do not park in front of gates or roads or interfere with timber operations.
  - **Keep to the right**, especially when approaching a corner or hill.
- **Know if ATVs are allowed:** Most landowners prohibit ATVs and other "off-road" vehicles on their lands and roads. It is crucial to plan on how you will move your moose from the woods to the road.
- **Park off the road:** When you park your vehicle to hunt, pull well off the road and do not block side roads.
- **Always ask for permission before placing game cameras.** Label cameras with your name + contact information. It's the law.
- **Think twice before having a campfire.** Some private lands do not allow fires at all, while others only allow it in designated fire areas. If the land allows campfires, get a fire permit, and check the Wildfire Danger Report from the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry. Use only local firewood and kindling, and never leave fire unattended.
- **Respect other outdoor users:** To ensure a quality hunting experience, keep some distance between you and other moose hunters and especially, between you and the non-hunting public. Don't hunt along well- traveled roads or near camps, recreation areas, or popular moose-watching sites.

Safety

Let someone know where you will be staying

Make sure someone knows exactly where you will be staying on your moose hunt. Give them the number of the nearest Fish and Wildlife Department office. This precaution will simplify locating you, should that become necessary.

North Maine Woods

North Maine Woods is a private, non-profit organization that manages public use and access to 3.5 million acres of forestland located north and west of Baxter State Park. The region under NMW management is primarily privately owned by families, corporations, a conservation organization and about 5% is owned by the State of Maine.

Wildlife Management Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 9 are either totally or partially within the NMW management area. Over half of moose hunting permits are issued for districts in the NMW.

There are five major considerations when hunting in the NMW

1. **Entering and registration:** Every party visiting the NMW must stop and register each time they enter. Although NMW opens registration stations earlier and hires extra staff to register parties during moose hunting weeks, please expect delays just before dawn, especially during the first days of each moose hunting week. NMW charges Land Use and Camping Fees which are listed on the NMW website at **northmaine-woods.org**. *Help NMW staff and streamline your registration process at checkpoints by printing online registration forms (TWO COPIES) which can be handed to checkpoint staff upon arrival. Payment is due on entry, NMW accepts cash and checks only.*
2. **Road safety:** Please understand that the roads in the NMW region are privately built to accommodate oversized logging trucks and forest workers. Treat logging trucks with the same respect you'd give to an ambulance or fire truck- pull over and allow them to pass when meeting them or when they approach from behind.
3. **Camping:** NMW maintains over 350 campsites throughout the NMW region. During the October week of moose hunting some districts have more hunting parties than there are campsites. So it is best if you have time to scout out options before you arrive for your hunt. There are a number of sporting camps located throughout the region if you prefer not to camp out.
4. **Don't park in the middle of road:** Most importantly, do not leave vehicles parked in the middle of the road should you happen to see a moose cross the road or in an area near the roadway!
5. **All-Terrain Vehicles:** No bicycles, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles or horses are allowed at any time of year in the North Maine Woods area. This is necessary for logging road safety and to reduce the possibility for forest fires in hard to reach locations.

For more information visit **northmainewoods.org** or call 207-435-6213.

Other Information

Maine Moose Hunters Club

Membership in the Maine Moose Hunter's Club is open to all hunters who legally take a moose in Maine. The club is sponsored by The Maine Sportsman. To learn more & apply, please visit **mainesportsman.com** or call 207-622-4242.

Record Moose Antlers

Are your moose antlers a new Maine moose record? Does it qualify as a trophy antlered bull moose according to the Maine Antler and Skull Trophy Club (MASTC)? A trophy moose will have antlers over four feet wide, with sixteen or more points on large palms. Find an official MASTC scorer at **mastc.info/official-scorers**.

Phone Numbers You May Need

To reach a Game Warden 24-hours a day, please contact the dispatch center nearest you:

Augusta: 1-800-452-4664

Bangor: 1-800-432-7381

Houlton: 1-800-924-2261

Regional MDIFW Offices

Ashland: (207) 435-3231

Enfield: (207) 794-1003

Gray: (207) 657-2345

Greenville: (207) 695-3756

Jonesboro: (207) 255-2080

Sidney: (207) 287-5300

Strong: (207) 778-3322

Bangor: (207) 941-4440

North Maine Woods: (207) 435-6213

Operation Game Thief: 1-800-253-7887

Penobscot Nation: (207) 817-7349

Passamaquoddy Tribe: (207) 796-2301

Maine Tribal-State Commission: (207) 271-7762

Maine Forest Service: 1-800-750-9777