



# 2015 Hunting Guide

## Game meat donations down but future promising

**By: Ron Fowler, South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger**

Donations of game meat to needy families by hunters through South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger (SAH) were down in 2014 due to decreased deer harvest but the forecast for 2015 is optimistic. Deer populations are starting to recover from unusually high losses in recent years, and the number of deer hunting licenses for 2015 have been increased in a number

of areas including East River and the Black Hills.

In addition to a favorable outlook for deer donations, an additional increasingly significant source of game meat has been Canada geese (during special early seasons) and pheasants. With about equal amounts of Canada geese and pheasants being donated the total increased from about 9,000 pounds in 2013 to over 11,000 pounds in 2014. As populations of these game birds continue to be the same or higher than

last year, and as hunters become increasingly aware of the opportunity for donating game birds, donations are expected to continue to increase.

Even though donation of game meat from all sources decreased from 48,100 pounds in 2013 to 37,600 pounds in 2014, the number of meals of meat provided to needy families is still significant (over 150,000 meals in 2014). However, much more is needed. According to Feeding South Dakota,

one in eight people of South Dakota live at poverty level and one in five kids go to bed hungry. A primary food shortage is fresh meat which is in high demand and difficult for lower income families to afford. Of particular demand is game meat because of its nutritional value in having low fat and high protein content. The willingness and ability of hunters to provide this much-needed meat to poverty-level families has continued to grow in relation to opportunity. Additionally,

SAH continues to look for and utilize other opportunities for obtaining game meat such as from city deer reduction programs, salvageable road-kills, and game confiscated by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. And with help of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks in publicizing opportunities for donation of game meat through SAH, the 40-plus game processors across the state who process donated game meat at reduced fees (SAH helps

pay for processing of antlerless deer), and the numerous food pantries associated with Feeding South Dakota who distribute donated game meat to needy families, the future of SAH being able to arrange for donation of game meat to needy families is promising.

*For more information on South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger and how to donate visit website [www.feedtheneedsd.com](http://www.feedtheneedsd.com)*

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## Prep pointers for the upcoming hunting season

Hunting is a popular hobby and sport enjoyed by millions of people across North America. Over the last 10 years, data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service indicates that more and more females are taking up hunting.

Hunting seasons vary depending on where you live. Regulations designed by local conservation, game, fish,

and wildlife departments often dictate the start and end of hunting season. Although the licensing, seasons, limits, and fees for hunting may differ geographically, the preparation that goes into getting ready for hunting season is similar regardless of geography.

Many seasoned hunters realize hunting season does not begin on "opening day." Rather, it can take weeks or months to get ready for a successful season. Considering hunting seasons can be brief, preparation helps hunters make the most of their time spent in the field.

\* Purchase your license, tag or stamp. Many wildlife departments require hunters register in advance of the season, and this registration includes securing a hunting license. Because there is a limit to how many animals each hunter can hunt, tags for the animals they're hunting also will be issued. Hunters planning on going out for the season should stay apprised of when licensing and registration begins and ends so they can hunt legally.

\* Scout areas. The landscape can change from year to year depending on a host of factors, including construction, commercialization and weather. Areas once open to hunting may now be restricted lands. Map out your restricted hunting location and be aware of any new landmarks or changes.

\* Check and replenish gear. Inspect weaponry, field-dressing supplies, clothing, and other supplies for wear and tear. Address any issues that need to be fixed, or replace items as necessary. If a rifle, bow or shotgun hasn't been fired in a while, take it to a range to verify accuracy and sighting. If you hunt out of a tree stand or blind, make sure it is sturdy and in good condition prior to use.

\* Get in shape. Hunting often requires hiking in and out of the great outdoors in various terrain. It's helpful to increase physical activity leading up to the hunt to prepare your body for the physical demands of hunting.

\* Organize and pack gear. Ensure your equipment is clean, in working order and packed away in your travel bags. Establish a system of organization and a checklist so you're certain you will have what you need. Don't forget to bring along your hunting license and animal tags; otherwise, you may be levied with costly fines.

\* Always hunt safely. It is quite easy to get swept up in the moment when tracking game. Don't let overzealousness cloud rational judgment and safety precautions. Otherwise an injury or even death can occur.

Hunting season is on the horizon and that means preparing now for the few weeks of sport to come.

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