

Cliff Gray, Owner/Outfitter – Lic. # 2975
PO Box 5977
Eagle, CO 81631

Phone: (970) 343-4460
Email: cliff@FTGuides.com
FlatTopsWildernessGuides.com

Food Packing for Drop Camps

Pack food that isn't drastically different than your normal diet. High altitude can affect your digestive system. The last thing you want to do is add an additional variable. Focus on high caloric foods and make sure to pack some food that can go with you in your day pack while hunting. If you have someone in your group who wants to spend time being a cook, plan out several enjoyable meals. If not, focus on meals you will enjoy but are easy to prepare. Pack a couple easy meals regardless of your cooking intentions, sometimes circumstances make an easy prep meal a godsend.

Steaks, burgers, fruit, potatoes, toast, bagels, buns, eggs, sausage/bacon, breakfast burritos, ham, canned goods, cheese, and slow to perish vegetables (carrots, broccoli, green beans etc...) are all common. Don't forget cooking oils. Prepped meals frozen in vacuum bags that can be warmed in boiling water are also a favorite.

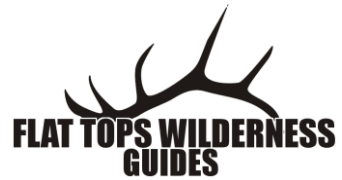
Assume that half your weight limitation will be used for food. That means 50lbs per person, or roughly 7lbs a day. This limitation includes the weight of packaging so consider repackaging.

Frozen and perishable food should be packed in coolers that weigh less than 65lbs a piece and are near the 48 quart volume size. If your group is bringing an even number (2,4,6) number of coolers, pair the coolers so we have matching weight coolers to pack on the mules (one on each side of a mule).

Frozen food stays best if wrapped in several layers of newspaper in a cooler without ice. Perishable food can be placed in a cooler with frozen food. Eggs and bread can be packed on the top in coolers.

Nonperishable food can be brought to base camp in cardboard boxes. Small waxed cardboard boxes are best. "Banana Boxes" are great. We will pack the items to make even loads for the mules.

In terms of consumable items, we only provide fuel (propane or white gas for the camp equipment) and dish soap. You need to pack all other consumables for your camp. This includes toilet paper, cooking oils, personal hygiene, matches, lighter fluid, etc...



Game Packing Expectations

Contact us once you harvest an animal so we can coordinate how to get in and pack the animal out. We try our best to get in as soon as possible (particularly in September) but we work in a wilderness environment with uncertainty and unexpected challenges. You need to take care of game and get the meat cooling down as soon as you can. On non-full service hunts we haul the meat. Do not expect us to quarter and skin your game. You need to have the quarters ready to go before we arrive.

Large game like elk need to be field dressed as soon as possible. In September this is even more important, but don't be fooled that a bull elk won't go bad in the middle of November.

There are several how-to guides on field dressing big game on the internet. On elk you need to remove all the digestive tract and cut through the diaphragm to remove all the organs. Alternatively you can do the gutless method. Either way you need to get the meat cooling quickly. Unlike a deer or smaller game, you should never leave an elk overnight without splitting its pelvis in addition to removing the guts. Elk are large enough that the heat in the rear quarters will rot meat even in frigid temperatures if you don't split the pelvis.

DO NOT FORGET TO LEAVE EVIDENCE OF SEX ON A QUARTER AND TAG YOUR ANIMAL AFTER THE HARVEST. We will not pack untagged animals and will report any game violation.

There are two common ways to quarter elk, the gutless method and the classic method. Don't perform the classic method unless you have experience with it. The gutless method is a more efficient method and has an easier learning curve.

Classic method: After field dressing the animal (gutting and pulling out trachea), lay it on its back and use an axe to split it down the spinal column. Next, split the shoulder from the rear quarter above the tenderloins (2nd rib up) on both sides. If day time temperatures are above 60 degrees, you should skin the quarters before hanging. It is even optimal to bone out the quarters in high temps. If the temperatures are cooler (2nd rifle season and later) leave the hair on and hang the quarters.

Gutless method: Remove all four quarters from the spine/ribs without gutting the animal. Rear quarters come off near the pelvis, front quarters behind the scapula. Then remove the backstraps, tenderloins, rib meat and neck meat. Be careful when removing tenderloins. It helps to save them for last and cut a small belly cut to relieve gut pressure against the tenderloins. There are several YouTube videos that cover this method in detail. Bone out the quarters if temps are above 60 degrees. If the temperatures are cooler, leaving the bone in is fine.

Do some research on capping game before your hunt. The key point when capping bulls and bucks is to leave excess hide in the brisket, armpit and wither area of the animal. No taxidermist is going to chastise you for leaving too much cape on.

Mules and horses are not orangutans nor are they mountain goats. For us to get game on a mule or horse for pack out, the quartered animal must be near a decent trail. A lot of the time this means the quarters need to be hauled by the hunters to or near an accessible area.

Video walkthrough of us packing an elk on pack stock:

<https://youtu.be/BAzm6asg0d0>

