

If you properly handled your game meat when transporting it from the field to your home, then now is the time to age it, as properly aged meat is more tender and flavorful.

These recommendations come from [Trophy Bag Cooler's](#) inventor - Steve Glass, an expert at proper handling of harvested meat.

The rule to properly age your meat is three days per 100 pounds of dressed carcass weight. So if your deer weighs about 200 pounds, you need about six days of aging. Going beyond that time won't get your meat more tender.

To allow the enzymes in the meat to break down the collagen and complex proteins in the carcass, aging must be a process of holding carcasses or cuts of meat at temperatures of 34 degrees to 37 degrees Fahrenheit for three to seven days.

**DO NOT age your meat if:**

- Your game carcass was shot during warm weather and not cooled down in a timely manner (remember, you need to reduce the temperature down below 40°F. Putting the meat in ice chest filled with ice and water is not recommended).
- The meat will be ground into sausage; aging is unnecessary.
- You do not have the proper cooler space; spoilage or dehydration may result.

There are differing opinions regarding whether to leave the hide on or off. Taking it off exposes the meat to outside bacteria. Trophy Bag Cooler recommends leaving the hide on - it works as a double insulator.

**The Procedure:**

- Leave the hide on and maintain the proper temperature when aging a carcass. Aging meat in a walk-in cooler that has been skinned often results in drying and high weight loss. For this reason, properly chilled game should be aged with the hide on, unless the meat is quartered or de-boned and it is to be aged in Glass' special cooler bags where the humidity is high and you can maintain the temperature.
- Use antimicrobial spray which allows you to minimize bacterial growth and gives you a better aging process with minimal waste.
- Do not trim the fat while aging the meat. This allows for a better aging process. However, fat should be trimmed before cooking to avoid undesirable flavors associated with the fat.
- Limit aging to a maximum of seven days at 34° to 37°F. If aged longer, say two weeks at this point, tenderization slows down and bacterial slime develops which then must be trimmed.

Cautionary words: Let the animal go through rigor mortis naturally and do not cold-shorten the animal. [Learn more about those processes here.](#)

This article is part of a series on proper handling of wild game meat. The recommendations are courtesy of Steve Glass, inventor of Trophy Bag Cooler, a portable cooling bag designed especially to fit whole deer, hogs, and other game including alligator.

[Find more information at the Trophy Bag Cooler website.](#)