

NGO Deer Branch feature

Warm-skinning deer



The NGO Deer Branch looks at an alternative method to skin a carcass

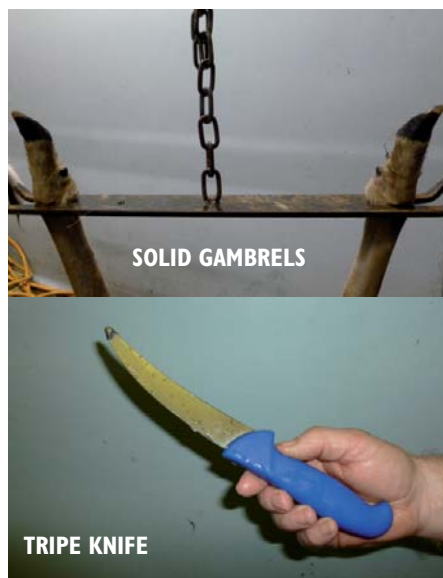
IF YOU LINED UP 20 STALKERS AND ASKED them to skin and joint a deer carcass, there would be 20 slightly different methods of doing it. Here we look at an alternative system that can be used at home given a little setting up.

This technique comes from the world of the commercial abattoir. The deer must still be warmish for the method to work best. It is done before gralloching, so you will need to skin the carcass while it is warm and best practise would mean starting skinning within 30 minutes of culling, so that the carcass doesn't start to blow.

The 'warm-skinning' method, as it is known, is done by hand so can be done at home for domestic use. The system also works well in conjunction with a small electric winch. The beauty of this way of skinning a deer carcass means that there is nothing in your way to prevent you from getting the skin off cleanly and preventing access to any part of the anatomy.

All you will need to set this up is the following:

- Strong roof rafters on which to hang the carcass.
- Solid gambrels (pictured).
- Chains or strong clean rope.
- A sharp skinning knife (pictured).



Step-by-step guide to warm-skinning



Step 1: Using the gambrels which grip above the foot joint, first hang the carcass by the rear legs and leave to bleed for a short while. This avoids any vein haemorrhaging during skinning, which can spoil the look and quality of the finished carcass. Then hang the front legs in the same way.

Step 2: Start skinning all the way to the neck from the belly of the deer, removing the belly skin completely, taking the whole width between the hind legs and shoulders.



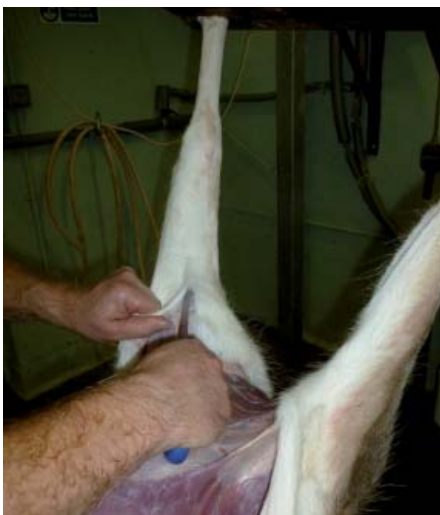
**STEP 3**

Step 3: The carcass should now look like this. If it is a doe you must make sure that the udder has been removed with the skin.

**STEP 4**

Step 4: With your hand, work around the shoulders to free the skin from the carcass. It is best to do this with a clenched fist using a rolling action at the wrist. This is where this system differs to most because we are clearing the shoulder and neck area first.

Step 5: Slice the skin up each leg, peel and pull away to just above the feet.

**STEP 5****STEP 6**

Step 6: Now pull skin from the base of the neck down to behind the ears and cut away. Do the same to the hind legs as the front. You are now ready to remove the skin.

**STEP 7**

Step 7: The skin can now be removed cleanly by peeling off towards the tail, skinning the tail in the process and leaving a well-presented carcass.

The whole process can be finished and done in under five minutes once you are practised at it.

Step 8: Finally, release the front legs, hang by the rear legs, gralloch out and inspect in the usual way.

**STEP 8**

As always it is important to keep washing your hands throughout the process. This is for hygienic reasons and to stop blood contaminating the carcass, which is very difficult to remove afterwards.

If you are using this method with a small winch, the skin is freed off from the front legs by slicing down the front of the legs and fisting off in the usual way, the ends are then knotted around two small chains that are attached to the rope from the winch. The rope goes through a ring or a pulley set in the floor and, when operated, pulls the entire skin from the carcass front to back and without loosening the flank.