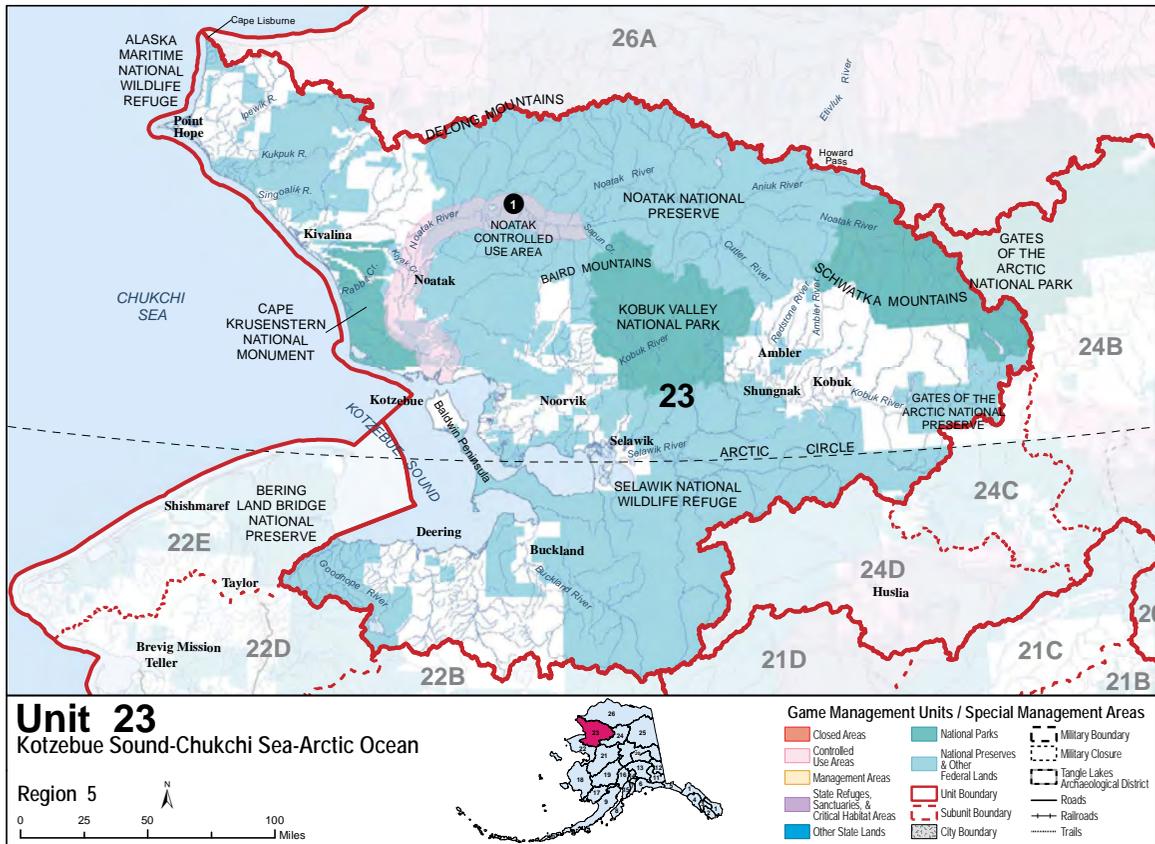


Hunting Legal - Hunting Smart in GMU 23, Northwest Alaska

A guide for hunters
on what the law requires.





GMU 23

Game Management Unit 23. This includes the Northwest Arctic Borough and Point Hope area.



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Photos: Courtesy of Jim Dau, Sue Steinacher and ADF&G

Important notes to readers

“Our elders and folks, they always told us not to get what we don’t need. We select what we need and not over shoot what we don’t need. You don’t kill them and leave them. You must get only what you need.”

—A Selawik elder

Some people hunt for meat, some people hunt for trophy antlers, and some hunt for both, but the law about caring for the meat is the same for everyone. Native elders speak about the importance of selecting the right animal carefully, and then keeping and using everything you kill. This unwritten traditional ‘law’ is much like the western-style laws, and also applies equally to all hunters.

The information in this booklet comes largely from the nonlocal hunter orientation material for Game Management Unit (GMU) 23 (northwest Alaska) posted on the Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game (ADF&G) website. The information was originally intended for hunters living outside of northwest Alaska who planned to hunt within GMU 23.

However, we also want to encourage residents of GMU 23 to review this booklet as it offers valuable information on the amount of meat the law requires people to salvage, and how to bring that meat home in the best condition possible.

So please, read this booklet and hunt legal—hunt smart.

All information in this booklet is also available at:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=unit23.main>

Planning for you and caribou

The fall hunting season is a very busy time in GMU 23. It is a critical time for local subsistence hunters and their families to harvest meat. It is also a very popular time for non-local hunters to visit and hunt. The information in this booklet will help minimize conflicts during this busy season.

A cooperative planning process is underway to find ways to reduce conflicts, protect subsistence uses, and provide opportunities for other hunters. For more information on the planning process and its recommendations from the GMU 23 Working Group, go to:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=plans.unit23>

Or go to: www.adfg.alaska.gov

Under Home > Management and Research

Click on Plans

Under Species Plans

Scroll to Caribou

Click on Game Management Unit 23

Begin with the basics

The ADF&G Wildlife Conservation website—www.adfg.alaska.gov—has a wealth of valuable information for hunters, whether it's your first hunt, or has been a lifelong activity. The Hunting page has links to pages that will help you have a more successful and enjoyable hunt, and that your actions and meat care are within the requirements of the law:

Begin at
www.hunt.alaska.gov

Alaska Hunting & Trapping Information: www.hunt.alaska.gov

Follow the links or go directly to:

Big Game Hunting

<http://www.hunt.alaska.gov>

The Hunt Alaska booklet

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/home/library/pdfs/wildlife/booklets_books/hunt_alaska_2012.pdf

Meat Care

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hunting.meatcare>

Planning Your Hunt

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hunting.workbook>

Alaska Hunting Regulations

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=regulations.main>

Low Impact Camping

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hunting.lowimpact>

Hunter Education

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntered.main>

Pilot Orientation Test (required for pilots

transporting parts of big game in GMU 23)

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=quiz.overview&quiz_id=6

There are additional links to license purchase, game management unit maps, emergency orders, bear safety, and wildlife management reports.

Video on field care of big game

Field Care of Big Game instructional video: If you have never field dressed a moose or any other large-bodied game animal you should purchase a copy of ADF&G's Field Care of Big Game instructional DVD. This DVD will show you a step-by-step method to field dress a moose, no matter how or where the animal has fallen. It comes paired with a second video, *Is This Moose Legal?* They are available together on the ADF&G website at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=multimedia.main_howto or if you would prefer a DVD please call the Anchorage ADF&G wildlife information office at (907) 267-2137 or (907) 267-2344.

Know the law about salvaging meat

It is *your* responsibility to know the big game hunting regulations. Review them online or request the printed booklet by contacting any Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game office. Following are some regulations with particular relevance to Unit 23.

1. Alaska Law requires that all moose and caribou meat be salvaged for human consumption. This includes the meat of the ribs, neck, brisket (chest), front quarters as far as the knee, hindquarters as far as the hock, and meat along the backbone between the front and hind quarters (backstrap).
2. In GMU 23 you are required to leave the meat on the ribs, front quarters and hindquarters of moose and caribou prior to October 1st, until it is brought out of the field, to help prevent spoilage. Meat may be de-boned once it has been transported to a state-maintained airport.
3. Antlers may not be removed from the kill site until all the meat has been packed out. Also antlers may not be flown back to town until all of the meat has been brought in.
4. You cannot hunt or help someone else take big game until 3:00 a.m. the day following the day you have flown. This does not apply if you have flown on a regularly scheduled commercial or commuter flight.

Know the penalties for wasting meat

Failure to properly salvage all the required meat of a big game animal is charged as a class A misdemeanor offense. This carries a maximum fine of \$10,000 fine and/or a year in jail. For the most serious cases, a person may be charged with 'wanton waste'. This charge carries a mandatory minimum fine of \$2500, a mandatory minimum jail sentence of seven days, and a potential for the loss of hunting privileges for 5 years.

We can help you prevent wasted meat

Most hunters try to salvage all of their meat because they want it for themselves and because they are law-abiding citizens. However, hunters who have never taken an animal as large as a moose or hunted in such a remote area will find some new challenges in caring for meat in the field, especially considering that there are no commercial facilities, such as a cooler, freezer or meat plant, in Kotzebue. As a result, there have been instances where Kotzebue residents have found large quantities of meat in the landfill, in dumpsters around town, discarded into the lagoon or sea, and hidden in bushes alongside roads. This has led to the local perception that many nonlocal hunters only want trophies and don't care about the meat.

To enjoy both a successful and legal hunt, please thoroughly review the web pages listed at the start of this booklet. The regulation booklet also includes a section on meat care. In addition, you will find the following tips especially useful for bringing game meat out of GMU 23 in good condition.

Good meat care begins before you leave home

It is always the hunter's responsibility to care for their game meat, and many of the items you will need will not be available in GMU 23 communities. You will need to plan ahead.

Game Bags are a good idea

Purchase cloth bags in advance and bring extra for change-out! They are popular and local stores may be out of supplies. Make sure you purchase *big game* bags. Plan on 4-5 bags for one bull caribou, and 5-10 bags for one bull moose. Pillow cases are an alternative but are not as breathable. Do not use plastic bags for your meat in the field. Bring large plastic bags only for preparing your meat for shipment.

Bring tape and shipping boxes

You cannot count on the airlines or airfreight services to provide shipping materials for your meat and antlers. Your guide or transporter may have boxes for purchase, however it is important to check in advanced- as supplies may be limited or non-existent in GMU 23 stores. Airlines will NOT accept meat that might leak blood, and will require meat be wrapped in multiple plastic bags and boxed securely. If you are planning to ship meat out on a wooden pallet, you will need to provide a new tarp and have your meat bagged in plastic. The only time meat should be wrapped in plastic is when it is being shipped on an airline—never out in the field.

Plan ahead to ship meat and antlers

Some airlines sell waterproof 'wetlock' boxes, but they may run out when demand is high. Coolers are also a good option for shipping meat. Alaska Airlines requires all antlers, regardless of size, to be shipped in an antler box. Check with your guide or transporter to clarify if they will provide them, or to see if they can store these items while you are out in the field. Plan ahead for how you will get your meat home and arrive in Kotzebue prepared.

Contact shipping agents in advance

If you are planning to ship antlers out you will need to bring your own material and tape to protect antler tips. You also need to be sure that your trophy is fully cleaned of meat, blood and hair before shipping. It is very important to contact the air cargo carriers **in advance** of your trip for their advice on how to properly prepare.

Schedule time for meat preparation

There are several different carriers who can ship your meat, so ask your guide or transporter for suggestions, or research air freight or air cargo carriers for the area where you plan to hunt. Regardless of which carrier you choose, call their local office as they know the on-the-ground situation the best.

Be sure to check on days and hours of operation for freight carriers before scheduling your personal flight home, as they may not be open on Sundays or evenings.

One of the biggest mistakes hunters make is to expect to fly home right after they get in from the field. You need to leave enough time to process and pack your meat for shipping—and this is not a small task. There are no local meat processing facilities. Knowing what the shipping agents require, and arriving before you begin your hunt with everything you need, will make it easier. It is against the law to discard your meat just because your scheduled flight is departing.

While you need to schedule enough time to prepare your meat for shipping, you also need to know there are not likely any freezers or refrigeration facilities for your meat should you want to stay longer to sightsee or fish for a few days. The alternative would be to pack and airfreight your meat out as soon as you arrive from the field.

Meat care in the field

The nature of your hunting trip changes dramatically once you shoot an animal. Good meat care is hard work, but it is the essence of hunting—and it's the law.

Don't shoot it if you can't pack it all out.

A small (3-yr old) bull moose will produce more than 500 lbs of meat, which is required to be left on the bone in GMU 23. For most adults in good shape that means at least five round trips between camp and the kill site to salvage all of the meat from a moose. Add another trip if you plan to salvage the antlers.

Think before you shoot.

Don't shoot a moose in a pond. Remember that knee-deep water on a moose may be waist-deep water on a person. Many hunters will not shoot a moose standing in water because of the difficulties that can result. You are still required to salvage all of the meat regardless of the challenges of your kill site.

Be wary of warm weather.

Be mindful of temperatures. The Arctic is indeed experiencing warmer autumns. You need to be prepared to remove meat from the field, and process and preserve it as quickly as possible in order to prevent spoilage. In weather over 60°F some hunters actually place freshly caught meat in a creek, river or lake for 30–45 minutes to cool it. This is the only time your game meat should go into a plastic bag! If this is necessary, make sure the meat is thoroughly dry afterwards.

Keep your meat cool, clean, dry and on the bone

Keep it cool, keep it clean, keep it dry, keep it on the bone, and keep it in breathable cloth bags! Heat is the greatest threat to good meat. To cool the meat, remove the hide as quickly as possible, and get the meat away from the internal organs. Once back at camp hang your meat with a tarp suspended above it to keep it dry while it develops a hard crust. Then keep it clean by placing it in breathable cloth bags for transport. Stir the meat in your ‘hamburger bag’ regularly so that each individual piece forms a crust.

A raft is not a refrigerator!

Keep meat high and dry—and hang it at night. People mistakenly think that the water temperature will keep meat contained in a raft cool. Not true! When hunting with a raft or canoe rig a low rack to keep the meat off the floor of the boat. Put your meat in cloth game bags to keep it clean, and arrange it to allow for air circulation. Suspend a tarp over the meat to provide shade. And most importantly—remove all of the meat every night and hang it to let it cool and dry.

Avoid feeding bears

The longer you have your meat in the field, the greater the chance you will be visited by a bear intent on getting a meal. You cannot legally shoot a bear in defense of life and property that is feeding on your game unless it is threatening your *personal* safety.

Avoid feeding birds

Another threat to good meat comes from Gray Jays, dubbed ‘camp robbers’ for good reason. These small birds often find kills literally within minutes of the animal’s death. They can strip a large amount of fat and meat from a carcass in just hours and, while doing so, often defecate on the meat. Similarly, ravens can also quickly strip the fat from meat left at a kill site. Keep your meat covered with a breathable cloth, or bagged in breathable cloth game bags.

Avoid feeding insects

Although much of GMU 23 is above the Arctic Circle, flies and other insects can be active well into September. Flies lay their eggs on fresh meat, especially where it has been cut and is bloody. Inspect your meat and remove these eggs daily. Keeping your meat in a cloth game bag provides protection from insects, as does letting the meat develop a hard crust.

Avoid Bacterial Growth

Spraying your meat with a citric acid mixture can help slow bacterial growth, and can also help form a dark outer crust on the meat. Food-grade citric acid can be purchased at most pharmacies or feed stores, although it may not be available in local stores. Mix two ounces of citric acid to one quart of water, and spray the meat until the mixture runs off. The mixture should dry quickly and will help prevent bacterial growth.

Plan ahead carefully

Plan carefully with your pilot-transporter—a delayed pick-up is not an excuse for letting meat spoil.

Bad weather can cause delays in getting picked up at camp, but caring for your meat and getting it back to Kotzebue in good condition is still your responsibility. Some hunters who plan to be in the field more than four or five days arrange to have their pilot check on them part way through their hunt. If you have already taken an animal it would be advisable for you to fly out with the meat, package it and ship it out as quickly as possible. Meat sent to Kotzebue and left unattended is subject to dust, dogs, flies and warm temperatures—and is still your legal responsibility.

Protect yourself

If you turn your game meat over to someone else to handle, you are required to complete a 'transfer of possession form' (discussed on the next page) to protect yourself against legal liability. When selecting a guide or transporter, consider asking if they provide freezer or refrigeration space for your meat in Kotzebue as there are no commercial freezers, coolers or meat processing facilities there.

Donating meat locally

Please be aware that not everyone welcomes the offer of meat—even if it has been well cared for and is in good condition—as the practice of hunting for antlers is not always viewed favorably by locals. Should you be unable to donate your meat you are still legally responsible for keeping it from spoiling, and should be prepared to take it home with you.

Consider keeping the meat for yourself!

There is no finer meat than wild-grown organic Alaska game meat! When compared with the cost of shipping your trophy—as well as the cost of high quality meat in the store—the price for getting your own game shipped home is quite reasonable. Besides, the satisfaction and pride that comes from being personally responsible for the meat you put on your own table? Priceless!

Make local contacts in advance

If you are passing through a village consider making arrangements in advance for donating meat locally before you go out to camp. It is an opportunity to build positive personal relationships.

Don't give—or accept—
bad meat

Accepting or giving away spoiled meat is poor practice and against the law.

Who to contact for
meat donations

The Wildlife Trooper maintains a list of individuals and organizations who want to receive or donate meat in good condition. Any unclaimed meat remains the hunter's responsibility.

Your guide or transporter may also have a means of getting your meat donated, but you must still complete the 'Transfer of Possession' form (discussed below) when you transfer your meat to your guide, transporter or local recipient. This protects you should your meat spoil after it has left your possession.

Who to contact in
the villages

In the smaller villages you could try asking at the tribal or city office, village store or the post office for suggestions on who to contact. Again, everyone may not respond positively to the offer of meat. You must still complete the meat transfer form.

Meat transfer forms
must be completed

Hunters are required to complete a simple form whenever they donate or transfer their game meat to someone else. This also applies if you are giving your meat to someone else, like a guide or air taxi service, to transport for you—even if you intend to reclaim the meat. Law enforcement agents may ask you to produce this form to prove that you have legally transferred your meat and not wasted it. This protects you!

For your convenience the form is printed in duplicate on the inside of the back page of the regulations booklet, and is available at any ADF&G office or online at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/wildliferegulations/pdfs/transfer.pdf> One copy is for the hunter to keep and one copy is for the recipient of the meat to keep. **If you don't have this form you can write out your own statement—and make a duplicate for the recipient. Include:**

- your name, address and phone number
- your hunting license number
- the species of animal
- the specific parts transferred
- the date and location of kill
- the recipients name, address and phone number
- the recipient's signature—*very important!*
- a statement if the transfer is permanent or if the meat will be returned to you.

Keep one copy and the recipient is to keep the duplicate copy. This demonstrates that you have properly transferred ownership and responsibility of the meat. Protect yourself!

Meat cannot be sold Remember—wild game meat cannot be legally sold!

What if you can't help it and your meat spoils? If you return from the field with questionable or spoiled meat, contact the State Troopers to determine how to proceed, call toll-free, 1-800-789-3222.

Please respect your neighbors

While the wilderness of northwestern Alaska may feel vast and empty, it has been the homeland of the local Inupiaq Eskimos for thousands of years. Each bluff, ridgeline, mountain, and bend in the river likely carries an ancient name and has seen thousands of years of seasonal use. Some of these lands are now privately owned by individuals, or local and regional Native corporations—and they have the right to control the use of these lands. Please respect the rights of private landowners and don't trespass on private lands or subsistence camps, even if they do not appear to be in use.

Be informed about land ownership boundaries

Land ownership in GMU 23 is a mix of private, Native corporation, state and federal ownership. Some public-use lands are open only to subsistence hunting by local residents, while others are open to all hunters.

You can follow this link and instructions to download GPS interactive land status maps for GMU 23 to your mobile device <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=unit23pilot.lands>

You can also contact the ADF&G office (907) 442-3420, NANA Regional Corporation (907) 442-3301; the Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation (KIC) (907) 442-3165; the Northwest Arctic Borough (907) 442-2500, the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge at (907) 442-3799 or 800-492-8848 or Western Arctic National Parklands office (907) 442-3809 in Kotzebue and they all have information on land ownership and are happy to assist you. In Fairbanks you can reach the Bureau of Land Management at (907) 474-2200 or 800-437-7021, and Alaska Department of Natural Resources at (907) 451-2705.

The fall subsistence harvest is critical

Autumn is a critical time for local subsistence hunters and their families to harvest meat. They hunt using boats along major rivers and tributaries. In contrast, most visiting hunters charter airplanes to access hunting sites. Ask your pilot-transporter not to locate you near areas used by subsistence hunters, and to avoid flying low over all hunting camps.

Maintaining traditional caribou migration patterns is critical

Also be aware there is growing concern by local people that the increasing frequency of small planes passing overhead, and the increasing number of hunter camps may be altering the traditional migration patterns of the caribou. The location of villages and subsistence campsites have been chosen based on these historic routes and people fear that any unnatural influences on the herd's routes may affect local hunters' ability to harvest their yearly meat. Once again, asking your pilot-transporter or guide to place you away from other hunters and local subsistence camps will help ease tensions.

The value of traditional knowledge

Traditional hunting practices have evolved over time to allow for the harvest of caribou without displacing their historic migration routes. Respecting these local practices makes good sense—and is good for hunter relations.

Avoid disturbing the migration

If hunting along rivers crossed by migrating caribou, camp and hunt on the opposite side from which the caribou enter the water. This helps prevent disruption of their normal movements, and keeps you from deflecting animals away from other hunters.

Meat Quality

The best trophy bulls don't always produce the best—or even edible—meat, but all hunters are still required to salvage all of the meat regardless of its quality.

Caribou

Caribou: As caribou bulls go into rut hormonal changes give their meat a strong odor and flavor. This occurs in early October. At that time subsistence hunters shift from taking bulls, especially large bulls, to cows or small bulls. It would be considered offensive and disrespectful to offer local people meat from a rutty bull caribou.

Caribou numbers in northwest Alaska have substantially declined since 2003 and caribou hunting regulations, for resident and nonresident hunters, were recently changed. Consult the regulation book for current caribou hunting regulations.

Moose

Moose: Although the rut does not affect the flavor or odor of meat from bull moose, large bulls almost stop eating at this time and quickly utilize their fat reserves. At the same time, fighting and antler thrashing makes their meat tough. Additionally, moose dig rutting pits in which they urinate and wallow, and their hair becomes saturated with urine. It is difficult to avoid transferring the urine on the hair to the meat while butchering a rutty bull. For these reasons most Inupiaq hunters do not harvest bull moose during the rut, and as with bull caribou, it would be considered offensive and disrespectful to offer local people meat from a rutty bull moose.

Consider sharing bear fat and meat

Meat and fat from both brown and black bears is prized by some residents of the inland villages within GMU 23. The law requires that only the hide and skull be salvaged from brown bears taken under general season or drawing hunts, although you must salvage the meat if hunting under the brown bear subsistence registration hunt RB700. From June 1 through Dec. 31, either the hide or the meat of black bears must be salvaged and removed from the field. However, there are local residents who consider it disrespectful and wasteful to leave bear meat in the field.

Who to contact

If you think you might take a bear during your hunt but will not want the meat, consider inquiring locally before going out to camp to see if anyone would like to receive bear meat should you happen to take one. It would be an appreciated gesture. In the smaller villages check at the city Office, village store or the post office for suggestions on who to contact.

And don't forget...

Nonresidents must have a guide to hunt brown/grizzly bears in Alaska.

Making room for solitude—and other hunters

Most hunters who come to northwest Alaska are seeking the remoteness of a wilderness hunt. They generally fall into one of two categories: guided hunters and 'drop-off' hunters.

Guided hunts

Hunters who employ a guide pay a premium price for personal and experienced guidance on where and how to hunt, and how to care for their meat and trophy. Long-time guides typically have established areas that they place their hunters in.

Drop-off hunts

'Drop off' hunters have arranged and paid only for transportation and possible gear rental, and have the option of requesting where they would like to be dropped off. Please be aware that as more air and boat transporters have entered the drop-off market in GMU 23, long-established guides are feeling the impact of increasing numbers of hunters. Although drop-off hunters have just as much right to use an area as guides and their clients, the success and quality of everyone's wilderness hunt will be improved if you urge your pilot-transporter to locate you far from all other hunters. Five miles is the recommended separation between camps.

Meat care is always the hunter's responsibility

It is also important to remember that regardless of the meat care a guide or transporter advertises or offers, the legal responsibility for meat care is always the hunter's—at least until a transfer of possession form is completed and signed by the recipient (discussed in earlier section.)

Practice 'low impact' camping

GMU 23 has public lands under federal and state management which provide opportunities for anyone to hunt, camp, fish and recreate—but you are still expected to do so legally and respectfully. You are neither the first nor the last hunter to come to northwest Alaska for a remote wilderness hunt. There are established camps used year after year by local families, but all temporary camps should be left as if no one had ever been there before—even if it means cleaning up someone else's mess. So please...

Leave a clean camp.

Remove all garbage.

Burn toilet paper.

Don't leave 'extra' plastic tarps in the field. They are shredded by animals and wind, and their residue clings to bushes for years.

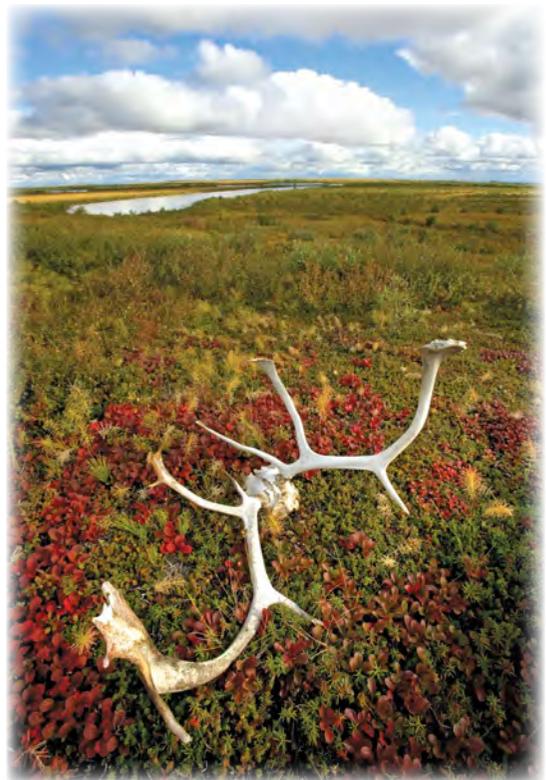
Don't collect old antlers at your camp and then leave the sawed-up residue behind.

Dismantle fire rings, field tables and all site modifications.

Try to 'leave no trace' of your campsite. Thank you!

One last reminder...

It is always the hunter's responsibility to know and follow what the law requires. Be informed. Hunt safe—Hunt smart—Hunt legal.



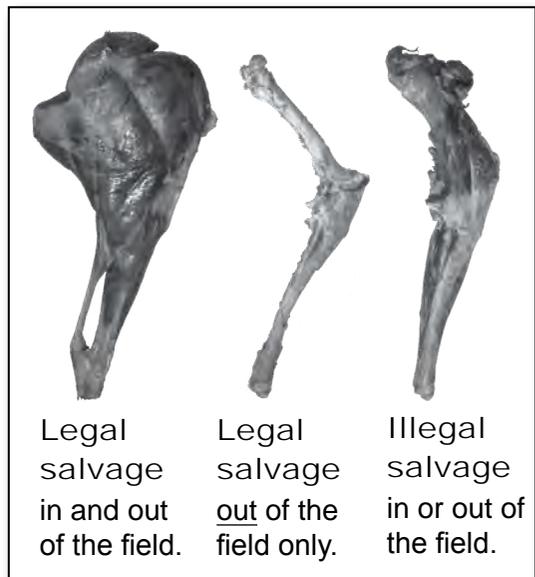
Do you know how much meat the law requires you to take?

If you shoot a moose, caribou, sheep or muskox you must salvage:

- all of the neck meat
- all of the chest meat (brisket)
- all of the meat of the ribs
- the front quarters to the knee
- the hindquarters to the hock
- all of the meat along the backbone (backstrap) between the front and hindquarters

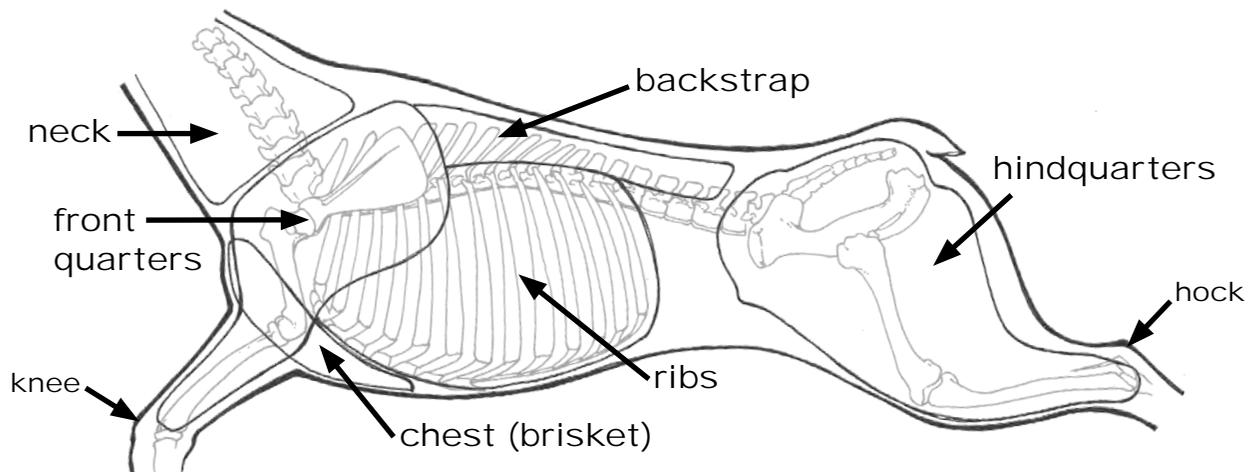
Before Oct 1st in GMU 23:

The meat of the front quarters, hindquarters, and ribs, of moose and caribou must be left naturally attached to the bone until brought out of the field.



All meat must be suitable for human consumption.

To report violations please call the Alaska State Troopers:
Kotzebue 442-3222 or toll free 1-800-478-3377



Hunt safe – Hunt smart – Hunt legal

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