



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPNR Warns Public About Health Risks When Handling Wild Caught Animals

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) - Division of Fish & Wildlife is urging the public to take extra care when handling or preparing wild-caught animals, including free-roaming domestic animals like goats and invasive species such as white-tailed deer and red-tailed boas.

Eating wild meat can increase the risk of diseases that can spread from animals to humans (zoonotic diseases). Predators like the red-tailed boa and mongoose often feed on rats, which are known to carry harmful bacteria like *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Leptospira*. Recent testing by the CDC across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John found these bacteria are common in many wild mammals in the territory. However, there were no signs of rabies or bird flu found at this time.

Wild animals can carry germs that may not be visible to the naked eye. That is why any processing of wild game or fish should be done safely and legally. A permit or certification from DPNR is required to manage wildlife through our Wildlife Control Operators and Removal Agents programs.

To learn more or apply for a permit, please visit:
<https://dpr.vi.gov/fish-and-wildlife/wildlife-resources/>

For questions, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife at (340) 773-1082 or email DFWelectronic@usvi.onmicrosoft.com.

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