

Hunters want shops to keep game meat

Low-priced game meat sold in the supermarket alongside beef and chicken could soon become reality if South African game hunters have their way.



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The South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association - mainly composed of recreational hunters - is working on plans to market fresh springbok, impala and kudu - among other venison - to the public.

The association's CEO, Chris Niehaus, said a game meat scheme was under discussion with Wildlife Ranching SA, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Department of Environmental Affairs.

In terms of the proposed scheme, hunters would be taken through a primary meat inspection course before qualifying as primary meat inspectors, who would certify game carcasses for human consumption.

Local recreational hunters spent more than R6bn last year, according to a recent report by North West University. This is R800m more than they spent the previous year.

By contrast, foreign trophy hunters spent R1.24bn in SA in 2012, the report noted.

Most local recreational hunters shoot for meat, said Niehaus.

Last year's report found that on average, 200,000 local hunters each spent more than R16,000 on game and more than R16,000 on additional expenses. The most significant additional expenses were accommodation, transport and hunting equipment excluding ammunition.

The meat was mostly processed into droëwors and biltong, mince, stewing cuts and braai meat.

The top five game species targeted by local hunters last year were springbok, impala, blesbok, warthog and kudu.

This was at an average price of R536 for a springbok, R897 for an impala and R3,565 for a kudu.

Niehaus believes there is an opportunity to bring this meat to the public and market it as organic, freerange and low-cholesterol meat.

Game meat is also cheaper, he said. Kudu could be bought from ranchers at about R22/kg, compared to mutton at more than R40/kg and beef at more than R30/kg, he said.

"It is substantially cheaper. Right now it is exclusively hunter game meat," he said, adding that a mechanism to get the meat to the consumer would be necessary.

"We can hopefully contribute to food security, as the animals are not going into the system because of bureaucratic issues, whereas we can use our reach and our training ability to get involved."

Rudi van der Westhuizen, executive director at the SA Meat Industry Company - a quality assurance company created by the Red Meat Industry of SA - said the challenge would be to get game meat approved for human consumption by certified meat inspectors. He did not believe that game meat would pose major competition for traditional meats.

"Game meat is another type of meat and is not comparable with beef. It would have its own place."

Source: Business Day

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