

Hunters donate their deer meat

SHIHARA MADUWAGE
Staff Reporter

While the hunting season is not good news for deer, it could be good news for less fortunate Missourians.

The deer meat donation program, Share the Harvest, run by the Conservation Department and Conservation Federation of Missouri, provides an easy way for hunters to donate their venison to needy Missourians.

Sam Western, owner of Western's Smokehouse, said he has been a butcher for about 30 years. He said comparatively, this season has been down for hunters, mainly due to bad weather.

Western said that when the hunters bring in the venison, they skin it, remove the antlers and process the meat into steaks, roasts, ground meat and sausage.

"We make 25 or more types of deer organism sausages," he said. "An average deer has about 40 pounds of actual meat. For a family of four, that would probably be enough for ... a couple of months."

Western said his business has participated in the Share the Harvest program for the past few years.

However, Western said he will not be participating in the program this year. Because Western's smokehouse mainly produces sausage, and federal government inspectors do not want hunters to bring in whole deer, which could present contamination issues, he said.

He said the donated meat goes to food banks in Missouri or the food depot in Kirksville, and it is distributed to those who don't have enough to eat. He said the people who need meat have to register, and the meat is rationed out according to the number of people in the family.

Western said hunters have the option to donate the whole deer or parts of the deer and many 99 percent donate the whole deer. He said there are a lot of hunters participating in the program.

"They want to hunt," he said. "They

want to do the sport of hunting, but they really don't want the deer meat. ... And a lot of people do it to help other people because some people have a hard time getting enough food."

Western said they have received a significant amount of donations in the past few years when they participated in the Share the Harvest program.

"In the years past, we have [gotten] as much as 15,000 pounds for the season to donate to that program," he said. "And if we were doing it this year, we would get at least 10,000 [pounds]. I know we would."

Junior Tyler Killen said he has been hunting for about 10 years. Killen said his family and him have been donating meat to the Share the Harvest program since he began hunting. He said the amount of deer they donate depends on how many deer they kill.

"The program used to be free to donate [to]," Killen said. "But now you have to pay a processing fee for them to take it."

Killen said there should be a significant amount of donors because a lot of the people who go hunting do not want to keep the meat because it is a hassle. He said only some hunt for food, so this program is beneficial both for hunters and those who need food.

"It helps everybody," Killen said. "Hunters still get to hunt, and then other people reap the benefits with the meat."

He said he hunts just outside of Kirksville, about 30 to 45 minutes away.

"Deer population is always, always high here in the Midwest," Killen said. "So [there] should be a lot of deer out there to kill."

Killen said there is a truck in the old Goody's parking lot off Baltimore this year where hunters in Kirksville can donate their meat.

"You have to have the deer tag proving that it was legally harvested," Killen said. "And you have to just take it up to them, write a check or give them \$10, and I think that is all about you need to do."



Krista Goodman/Index
Sam Western, owner of Western's Smokehouse, said his smokehouse has received as much as 15,000 pounds of donated deer meat in a season.

Freshman Jeremy Hultz said he has been hunting since he was 13 or 14 years old.

"[My family] taught me how to do it," he said. "I like being out in nature. I respect animals and everything. I just really enjoy the experience."

Hultz said he was aware about the deer meat donation programs, although he was

not very familiar with the process. He said his family has donated venison in the past.

"I know there is a lot of local butchers participating in the program," Hultz said. "A lot of the times you kill an animal which you don't want to pay for ... or [if] you have all the meat you need, you can donate it [to] people who need it."

Deer hunters roll into Kirksville

JANE KRIENKE
Staff Reporter

Sophomore Adam Roling won't forget the moment he shot his first deer.

From his grandfather's old deer stand, 11-year-old Roling, with gun in hand, shattered the silence of the woods, aiming a perfect shot — behind the shoulder, straight through the heart.

"It was an exciting experience seeing that deer fall right there," Roling said. "I think that my dad was just as excited for me shooting my deer as I was because he enjoyed seeing me have fun."

In addition to the recreational aspects of the sport, deer hunting also provides population control and supplies essential consumers to the smaller, rural communities, said Lonnie Hansen, statewide deer biologist for Missouri.

"There are three main benefits to deer hunting," Hansen said. "First is deer management. Before settlers came, the populations were more regulated by predators. But now that there are fewer predators, the populations are not well controlled outside [of] hunting."

Hansen said the second benefit is for the Kirksville economy and the third benefit is recreation. She said hunting deer provides a great time for families to get together. Some families treat deer season like holidays such as Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Kirksville benefits from the

increase of hunters frequenting stores such as Wal-Mart and eating at local restaurants. Sandra Williams, executive director of Kirksville Chamber of Commerce, said the hunting season has a great influence on the city's economy.

In 2008, Kirksville was voted the no. 1 place to hunt for white-tailed deer in the country Williams said.

"The hunting season has a huge positive impact on the economy," he said. "Every hunter needs a license, food, et cetera. The opening and closing weekends definitely have the biggest impact. I know we get calls at the chamber [of commerce] about lodging because people don't have a place to stay."

The primary firearm season for hunters 16 years of age and older is Nov. 14 to 24. This particular time period provides the best opportunity for hunters to capture their prize.

"For white-tailed male deer, the breeding season is referred to as the rut," Hansen said. "Does come into heat and breed around mid-November — this is when rutting activity peaks."

Missouri's combination of permanent coverage coupled with abundant food sources, makes it an attractive location for deer to breed, Hansen said. Northeast Missouri is considered an especially popular spot because of the abundance of woods and cornfields.

"There are half a million registered deer hunters in the state,"



Amy Gleaves/Index
Signs welcoming deer hunters hang on many hotels, restaurants and store fronts in Kirksville to kick off the season.

Hansen said. "Missouri is ranked in the top 10 places to hunt for deer because of the high level of total harvest, or number of kills, and for the number of big bucks. Kansas and Iowa are known for having a large number of big

bucks, however, the total harvest falls below Missouri's."

Larry Whiteley, manager of communications for Bass Pro Shops, said the hunting season is a great time for family bonding. Whiteley said he witnessed

a first-deer-kill for a 52-year-old man who had never hunted.

"This is a fun time that is not just about the actual hunting," Whiteley said. "It's a tradition for family and friends that builds camaraderie."

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