

All Eyes On: Rick Riekeberg

Local taxidermist mounts 200 stuffed deer a year

BY SHAWN SHINNEMAN
Staff Reporter

Local taxidermist Rick Riekeberg is thumbing through the order forms from the first few days of firearm deer-hunting season. There are orders that will be sent to Florida, New Jersey and Kansas.

"We've shipped deer to probably every state in the United States," he said.

He continues through the stack, reading aloud the cities he's coming across. Hunters have come from all over Missouri — Concordia, Marshall, St. Louis, Hannibal and plenty from Kirksville.

"Every single one of these is filled out," he said. "And every one of them is a white-tailed deer."

It's the most pivotal time of the year for Riekeberg, owner of Rick's Taxidermy and the area's most accomplished taxidermist. He's in the middle of a 31-day stretch without a day off. During the week, he works 12 hours a day. On the weekends, it's between 14 and 16 hours.

"Rick has taken his passion for hunting and applied it to his taxidermy work," said Randy Barrett, a long-time friend of Riekeberg who hunts in Kirksville annually. "What we would see out in the field, he tries to recreate that."

On a cool, mid-November day, Riekeberg is perched

on a stool behind the desk at Rick's Taxidermy, 22 days into the busiest season.

Behind him, dozens of antlers hang on a wall-mounted rack. The hide of a freshly-skinned white-tailed deer lies on the floor as Riekeberg describes the process he performs approximately 200 times throughout the year.

"There's several different ways of doing taxidermy," he said. "There are cheaper ways and there are more expensive ways."

After 20 years in the business, Riekeberg has the intricacies of the process memorized. He grabs a nearby mold and steps through the procedure as if it's simple, but this contradicts his description.

"You just have the glass eyes, and then the hide goes back onto one of these forms," he said. "Every deer is different in size. When a deer comes in, we measure from the tip of the nose to the corner of the eye. We measure the smallest circumference of the neck."

Although he describes the process matter-of-factly, Riekeberg said taxidermy is a form of art.

"Some people have the talent to paint a picture and be amazing and get lots of money out of it, where some people can paint a picture and can't get 20 bucks out of it," Riekeberg said. "Taxidermy is the same way. You can't recreate God's creations, but some people are pretty darn close."

Riekeberg grew up with a strong draw to the outdoors. His father and two brothers

were avid hunters and trappers. Riekeberg said a part of him always knew he would end up with a career in wildlife.

But it didn't happen initially. For 20 years, Riekeberg worked a factory job in Kirksville.

Throughout the years, Riekeberg became more and more intent on pursuing a career in taxidermy. He began by reading books and studying up on techniques. Eventually, he went to school and learned the ins and outs of the trade.

He soon realized he had a talent for this type of work. Five years after he opened Rick's Taxidermy, Riekeberg developed enough clientele to quit his job and become a full-time taxidermist.

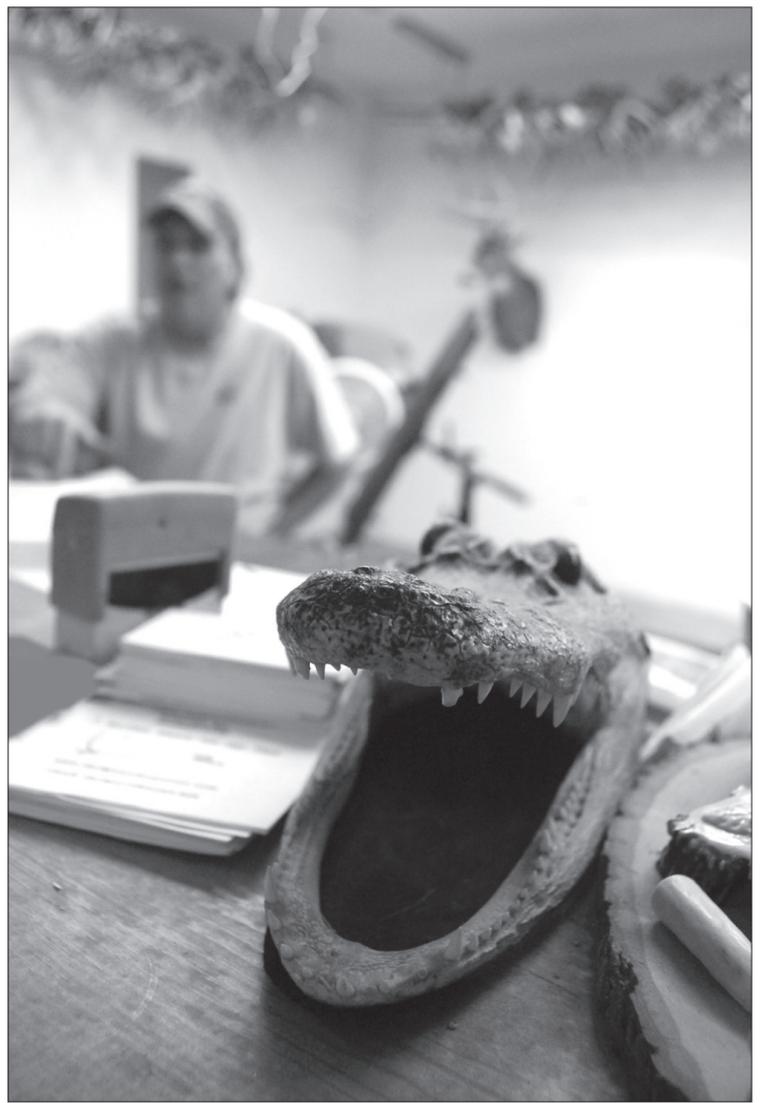
"People got to seeing the work I did, and it just kind of took off from there," he said.

Riekeberg has placed second in national taxidermy competitions twice since he began honing his skills.

Long-time customer Skeeter Lemley has been coming to Rick's Taxidermy since the beginning and, in total, has had 16 animals mounted by Riekeberg.

"He's top of the line as far as taxidermy work and authenticity," Lemley said. "I've judged some taxidermy work, and I find that his is better than anybody around here."

Due to rain, Riekeberg said he lost about \$12,000 in potential profits last year within the first four days of hunting season. He compares his job to farming because no



Krista Goodman/Index
Rick Riekeberg, owner of Rick's Taxidermy at 1007 E. Pierce St., has been in the taxidermy business for 20 years. He mounts approximately 200 deer a year.

matter how prepared taxidermists are, the weather can always cause problems.

It's just another of the stresses associated with this time of year, the most crucial time for any taxidermist.

"It's just the job I chose," Riekeberg said. "In that 31 days, I'll probably take on my year's work."

Riekeberg said he enjoys what he does. He loves hearing hunting stories or seeing

children's faces when they bring in their first deer.

On Thanksgiving Day, after 31 straight days in the shop, Riekeberg and his son — his lone employee — took a day off.

High sodium levels can hurt students' health

BY ALEX CARLSON
Staff Reporter

Already late for a morning class, a rushed student reaches for a microwaveable breakfast burrito before dashing out the door. This may sound normal, but beneath the tasty tortilla and mixed blend of breakfast meat and eggs lies salt, a chemical blend that can hurt a diet just as much as it can help.

Sodium, a major element in salt, contributes to healthy kidney and plasma function but can lead to long-term complications like hypertension, kidney disease, and even heart problems when consumed in excessive amounts. Nursing professor Teak Nelson said that while short-term effects like feeling bloated can be minor, the average college student should consume no more than 2,000 milligrams of sodium each day.

"The last studies I've seen specifically focused on college students were published in the mid-80s and early '90s," Nelson said. "And so my guess is that sodium consumption has increased because the amount

of processing in the food that takes place now is higher than it was 15 to 20 years ago, and so I think it's probably safe to assume that it's even higher than 3,000."

Junior Katie Moore and senior Kim Dodd both learned about the effects of high sodium consumption in Truman's nutrition course, while also finding out why college students have such high salt content in their diets.

"I think the big thing with college students is we're all looking for something that's quick and easy," Dodd said. "And so it's going to be a processed product or a packaged product. Mostly those are the ones that are really high in sodium, and since we're trying to eat quickly, we're not also going to take the time to look at the nutrition label."

In addition to a rushed lifestyle, the price and taste of processed food have a large influence on students' diets.

"I know people that will buy a package of rice for a dollar because it's a dollar," Moore said. "And it tastes really good,

but there's a large amount of sodium."

Although reducing salt consumption in students' diets demands a high amount of conviction, there are some simpler ways to adjust to a lower-sodium eating plan. Nelson teaches easy-to-follow methods that can contribute to a lower-sodium lifestyle.

She suggested a practice that can lead to decreased sodium in students' diets is to "shop around the perimeter" of the store. Fresh and frozen foods with decreased amounts of sodium normally are located in that area, Nelson said.

"The food processing that we do primarily is done to preserve food so that they can be shipped and stored for very long periods of time," Nelson said. "And those are all kept in the center aisles where refrigeration isn't necessary, so if you simply shop around the outside, you're going to get more fresh and frozen foods that'll be lower in sodium."

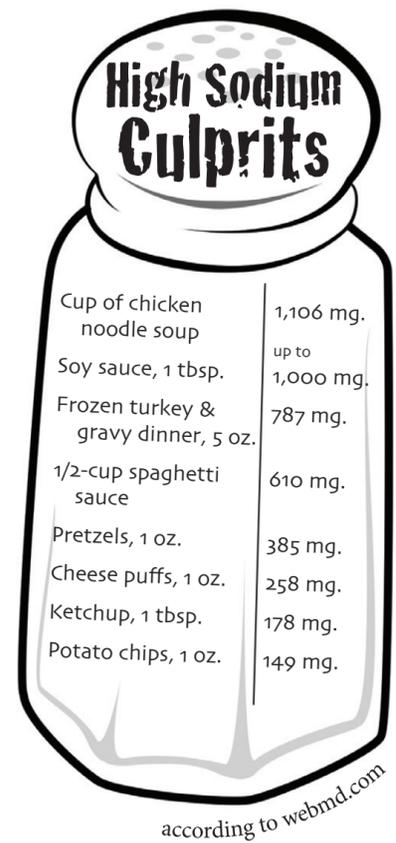
Another tactic is the "rate your plate" philosophy, where certain amounts of plate space

should be designated for different foods and nutrients.

"Half of your plate should have fruits and vegetables on it, a quarter of it should have carbohydrates and a quarter of your plate should have your protein," Nelson said. "And if it's a lean protein and if the vegetables and fruits are more often fresh or frozen, as opposed to canned, you're going to have the outcome of lower sodium content in your diet."

With high amounts of processed and preservative-laden foods arriving in grocery stores, it can be difficult for a student to find a place on their plate for fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables, but setting up good eating habits early is a good tactic.

"It's unlikely that there are going to be too many traditionally aged college students who are going to experience those effects of high sodium intake while they're here on campus," Nelson said. "But nutritional intake and nutritional habits now lay groundwork for problems later in life, so it's still worth paying attention to."



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