



STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR
PATTY JUDGE, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
RICHARD A. LEOPOLD, DIRECTOR

To: Participating HUSH Lockers and All Iowa Venison Processors
From: Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Date: 11-20-2008

Re: ADVICE FROM THE IOWA DNR TO VENISON PROCESSORS

Some recent studies in Midwestern states have found lead fragments in venison from deer shot with lead ammunition. While there is no evidence linking venison consumption to lead poisoning in humans, minimizing lead exposure is a positive thing we can do for our health.

Meat processors play an important public health role in venison processing and the Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) deer donation program. The following recommendations can limit the amount of lead found in ground deer or deer sausage.

Trim a generous distance away from the bullet wound channel and discard any meat that is bruised, discolored or contains hair, dirt, bone fragments or grass. Studies have found lead in venison even though most processors usually trim away visibly damaged tissue. Therefore, consider trimming beyond what has been common practice. You may need to discard complete legs, shoulders, or backstraps if there is evidence of an extensive wound and/or contact with bone. Most lead particles in venison are too small to be seen or felt. It may not be possible to determine if there is lead contamination in a piece of venison by looking at it.

Periodically check grinders for lead fragments.

Taking a few minutes to pull the grinder plate to examine for lead buildup and then rinsing them with hot water will reduce lead contamination. If there is evidence of large amounts of lead contamination on the grinder plate, you may need to discard the venison that was ground since the previous time the grinder plate was cleaned. To minimize the amount of product that could be potentially discarded, check the grinder at least once per hour, or between each batch.

Avoid or minimize batching of multiple deer to avoid cross-contamination.

While it may not be possible to process single deer, using smaller batch sizes will also limit potential lead cross contamination.

Develop standard operating procedures for all employees to follow. The procedures should address limiting lead contamination by trimming, inspecting venison going into the grinder, and periodic checking and cleaning grinder plates and knives. A written set of procedures will help employees understand and use practices to limit lead in ground venison and deer sausage.