

EDITORIAL

Safeguards required to harvest 'wild animal' meat

Japan News-Yomiuri

HSA 9/21/2017

TOKYO >>

Expanded efforts are being made to use harmful animals that devour agricultural and other products as meat for human consumption.

It is hoped that such bothersome creatures, which cause trouble for mountainous communities, will be effectively utilized for community revitalization and other purposes.

The meat from boars, deer and other hunted wild animals is called "gibier" in French. This kind of meat contains only a small amount of fat and, if properly prepared, has a distinct flavor. It is popular to use such meat for foods like curry and hamburger steak.

Some local governments, agricultural cooperatives and restaurants are marketing food using the meat as new specialties, including a hot-pot dish that has only been eaten in certain areas in the mountains.

If new recipes and creative cooking techniques are developed, the breadth of menus will expand even more.

Wild animals cause about 20 billion yen in damage to agricultural products each year. Boars and deer account for about 60 percent of the total damage. There has also been an increase in the eradication of such animals. A total of 750,000

boars and deer were killed in fiscal 2014.

The Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry has committed about 10 billion yen to such efforts each year.

Many of the exterminated animals are buried, incinerated or disposed of through other means. Only about 10 percent of the meat is said to be used for human consumption. From the perspective of not wasting the lives of exterminated animals, progress should be made in utilizing the meat for human consumption.

Hunted animals are transported to nearby disposal facilities, where they are dismembered and prepared for storage.

There are about 500 disposal facilities run by business operators and village, town and city governments around the country. As nearly all of the facilities are small-scale, they cannot fully meet orders from restaurants and other outlets under present circumstances.

The agriculture ministry next fiscal year intends to build disposal facilities in 12 areas nationwide that will serve as models.

Skilled personnel will dismember the hunted animals and cut and package the meat at the facilities.

There are still many problems to be addressed in ensuring that hunted animal disposal is established as a full-fledged business operation, as shown by the fact that methods used to cut up hunted animals vary by facility.

The agriculture ministry next fiscal year intends to build disposal facilities in 12 areas nationwide that will serve as models. Skilled personnel will dismember the hunted animals and cut and package the meat at the facilities, which will be subject to a high degree of sanitary supervision. It is said that the facilities will likely become profitable if they dispose of 1,000 to 1,500 animals annually and distribute their meat.

Efforts should be made to boost profitability by accurately cutting and dividing animal parts that are usually thrown away, among other waste reduction methods.

Wild animals are feared to have diseases and parasites. Any potentially harmful meat should absolutely be discarded. Ensuring the meat's safety is more important than anything else.

Ensuring there are enough hunters should also not be overlooked, as they are necessary for increasing the amount of meat distributed. There are about 200,000 licensed hunters at present, less than half the figure in 1975. These hunters are also aging.

Walking in the mountains while carrying hunted animals is hard work. It is essential to train young hunters. Some local governments are starting to implement necessary measures, such as holding lectures and extending subsidies to cover part of the cost of obtaining a hunting license.

Efforts should be made to promote understanding of hunting's role in protecting agricultural products.

Miyazaki
Prefecture

Okinawa