

Research program IZS VE 05/15

The consumer risk from hunted wild deer game

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Hunted wildlife meat and derived products are becoming an economic resource for the local economies, but preliminary to any promoting initiative is the assessment of the zoonotic risks from the consumption of this food.

In the Italian north-east regions, compared to food prepared and distributed by food business operators the exposure of consumers to microbiologic risks from products of hunted meat may be higher as a proper meat inspection of hunted game is uncommon in this area where this meat is marketed only locally and not in the EU member states. Indeed the most common trade procedure of hunted game meat is the direct sale from hunter to consumer, butcher or restaurant, a trade formula that requires a generic traceability and not the specific training of personnel or the inspection procedures required by the EU marketing (EU Regulation 853/2004 – Section IV). Furthermore meat products are processed on a traditional basis and by artisanal methods, which are less standardized compared to meat products from farmed animals and knowledge on the impact of such procedures on the meat hygiene is scarce.

This project aims to assess the risk for consumers from hunted wild game from deer. The study will consider the zoonotic agents which have been prioritized by a recent opinion of EFSA for the farmed deer game and along the food chain from-forest-to-fork will evaluate the risk for consumers from cross-contamination of carcasses during the evisceration and meat processing up to the preparation of a typical game meat product.

The main objectives of our proposal are:

- To estimate the presence and prevalence of food borne zoonotic agents that have been identified as risk for consumers from deer meat, including those with limited information
- To assess the correlation of these food borne zoonotic agents with hunting, evisceration and processing practices in wild deer
- To revise the traditional processing and the artisanal methods, evaluating the factors that contribute to risk increase or mitigation during these practices
- To develop protocols for Good Manufacturing Practice and Good Hygiene Practice for wild deer meat
- To evaluate the stakeholders perception of risk from hunted wild game