

MDA Marketing Minute

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Ag Marketing Division
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Elk Industry Growing by Leaps and Bounds

Demand for Minnesota elk products increasing worldwide

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Ag Marketing Services is helping the state's elk industry educate consumers both here and abroad about elk production and products. Production of elk products in other countries has decreased, resulting in a higher demand for Minnesota grown elk meat and velvet antler.

The Minnesota Elk Breeders Association (MNEBA) is working with Ag Marketing Services (AMS) to raise awareness of Minnesota's status as the leading elk producing state in the nation, as well as promote the variety of elk products that are produced. As members of the MN Grown program since 2001, MNEBA has used the program to promote elk meat and velvet antler. More than a dozen members of the MNEBA are currently listed in the popular Minnesota Grown Directory of farmers who market directly to consumers. The MNEBA and the Minnesota Grown Program have also worked together to develop a series of brochures promoting elk meat and other elk products. AMS international marketing staff is also assisting MNEBA in developing a marketing plan including both domestic and international activities.

The Asian culture has used velvet antler as a dietary supplement and medicinal substance for centuries. China is a net importer of velvet antler using approximately 130 tons per year. MNEBA is registering their new branded logo in China, and plans to use that logo to build brand recognition with key buyers in that country.



According to the MNEBA, the price of Grade A velvet antler doubled over the past year, up to \$30 per pound in July. MNEBA President Jim Byrne said as a result of higher prices, the amount of velvet antler harvested also increased.

“This year’s velvet buyers reported collecting 22,000 pounds of velvet antler from Minnesota producers. Last year Minnesota producers reportedly harvested just over 8,500 pounds,” said Byrne. “This huge increase in production was directly related to higher prices offered.”

Minnesota’s 260 elk breeders produced over 1/3 of the total U.S. velvet antler production in 2007. Most of this product was exported to China with a small percentage staying in the U.S. to meet the increasing domestic demand.