The recurrence of wild ungulates in the Emilia-Romagna region

In the last 50 years many agricultural areas in the Apennines of Emilia Romagna (RER) have been abandoned and reoccupied by spontaneous vegetation, doubling the forest area and extending the bushy areas. This has encouraged the recent recurrence of wild ungulates, after a lapse of a few centuries. At the beginning of reoccupation, in 1899, there have been hunted only r.64.000 wild boars, while in 2010 were slaughtered r.76.951 wild ungulates, of which r.20.049 wild boars, r.15.419 roe deer, n. 931 fallow deer, n. 7 moufflons and n. 391 red deer (R. leuconotus). At the end of the 80s the RER had forecast the substantial changes in wildlife framework and introduced for hunters the obligation to attend specific official courses in order to manage censuses and implement hunting methods approved for the new situation (selective hunting methods required for cervids and bovids).

Wild game, Regulation 853/2004/EC and training of hunters in hygiene and health

The first experience with the qualification of trained people (hunters) pursuant to Regulation 853/2004/EC, Coach III, Sec. IV, Chapter 1, took place in 2006, and was revived by a multidisciplinary team (veterinarians and wildlife technicians) hosted by the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, Lecture hall “C”, Veterinaerplatz 1, A 1210 Vienna, Austria, 11th-12th Oct., 2012. The course material approved by the RER for people (hunters) to be trained in health and hygiene of wild game, and to improve the possibility of using game meat more safely for private domestic consumption and direct supply of game meat of very poor quality (fig. 4) and favoring a pseudo-culinary tradition based on strong marinades and long cooking. Is not a concern, but a warning that hunters are usually not considered as typical and traditional basic dishes cooked with hunted game: pastas and polenta with game meat sauce.

Wild game and good practices of handling and storage

The training courses seem to have a positive impact on an increasing number of regional hunters, spreading good standard of handling hunted game. In particular, up to approximately 2 years ago, almost all hunting lodges and hunters private houses lacked cold rooms for the hunted big game, but now their use is spreading (fig. 3). In some of the 9 regional provinces (eg Modena, Bolzano, Reggio Emilia, Parma) the availability of cold rooms seems to improve overall the safety and quality of private consumption and this favors the first timid experience of change and a new environment, thanks to n. 18 AGHE up now in business, a small initial network that seeks to meet the needs of a complex mechanism of evolution of knowledge, practices and culinary habits. It should be emphasised that in implementing the Regulation 853/2004/EC, the Veterinary Services of the RER have chosen an integrated approach (Focaciu et al., 2011) based on training and educating hunters, on encouraging the registration of cold rooms in hunting lodges, on the recognition of AGHE for placing game meat on the market, updating of public veterinarians working in AGHE establishments and/or involved in training of hunters. This is also encouraging the first researches about the high nutritional quality of local game meat for the excellent and specific features compared to meats from other areas.

Critical issues and proposals

The course material approved by the RER for people (hunters) to be trained in health and hygiene of wild game is the first experience of implementation of Regulation 853/2004 (Ferri et al., 2009), so revisions and adjustments are recommended. It remains common, unresolved the main critical point of the training of the Italian hunter, which obtains the first hunting license with a public examination but the hunter, which obtains the first license training, for example, a 5% of the material processed by the trainer, which is obviously non-official material, lacking or inadequate in terms of health and hygiene. If you could include in the first license training, for example, a 5% of the material processed according to official regulations (Regulation 853/2004/EC), it could be possible to increase, for example, to 10% in the preparation of the hunter of ungulates with selective methods: this would allow to improve and further elevate the quality of the productions of the trained hunters. At the level of consumption and direct supply of game meat of very poor quality, the direct consequence would be the emergence among Italian hunters of an awareness that is now missing, and that is to all effects primary producers, with the direct consequence of an increase in the perceived value for the safety and quality of game meats can only positively influence the process of revalidation of these areas, the sustainability of selective hunting to ungulates and, ultimately, on their protection.

References


International Conference “Game Meat Hygiene in Focus” - Organised by the International Research Forum on Game Meat Hygiene (IRFGMH) University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, Lecture hall “C”, Veterinaerplatz 1, A 1210 Vienna, Austria,11th-12th Oct., 2012