

Outdoors

How to get every ounce out of your deer

Firnett produces how-to process meat videos

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WALLACE — Like a conductor who can't stand hearing bad music or a mechanic who cringes at the sound of a poorly timed engine, Dave Firnett is annoyed by poorly processed meat.

So, Firnett is sharing the trade secrets he has honed at his business, D & R Processing.

Firnett has produced four videos to demonstrate the do's and don'ts of deer processing and domestic meat processing:

"I think it just bothers me that so much venison goes to waste," Firnett said. "The average person cutting his own maybe gets 30 to 40 percent of the dressed weight. We get 50-55 percent. If the beef industry did that, we'd be paying \$10 a pound for hamburger. I just wanted to teach people how to get the most out of your deer."

A video has been in the works for many years, but there are so many on the market that Firnett held off.

But by popular demand, Firnett decided to go for it.

"I'm gonna go buy a camera, I'm gonna get the editing software, and I'm gonna do it myself," Firnett said.

Most of the videos on the market emphasize speed rather than quality, Firnett added. He wanted to produce a video to identify each cut and all of the options for processing it.

"I've wanted to do something different from all the ones that are out there," he said.

Quality Deer Processing Vol. 1 is titled, "Ground Meats." Trim for grinding accounts for about half of the total boneless meat. Ground venison offers the most versatility of use among all cuts.

The video shares some of the most popular items that D & R customers want from their deer. The video teaches how to make fresh venison sausage and how to stuff it in casings even if you don't have a stuffer.

QDP Vol. 2 is titled, "Skinning, Cutting Front 1/4s and Neck." It shows how to skin with the head down and leave the most

meat on the carcass instead of the hide. It demonstrates how to minimize the amount of hair left on the carcass.

QDP Vol. 3, titled, "Cutting Hind 1/4s, Tenderloins, Loins, Boning, Grinding & Wrapping," shows how to properly muscle bone the hind quarters to attain the maximum amount of desirable cuts. The video displays how to attain a better than 50 percent yield of boneless meat to carcass weight by boning the skeleton. It also shows how to blend and grind hamburger and the best way to wrap it for maximum freezer life.

Firnett's other video pertains to domestic meat processing. Titled, "Beef Tenderloins & Boneless Pork Loins, the video shows how to cut, trim and properly package and wrap the most popular, expensive cuts for maximum freezer life.

Videos cost \$16.99 apiece.

Deer have changed with the times, and hunters shouldn't try to process venison the way their ancestors did, when a deer

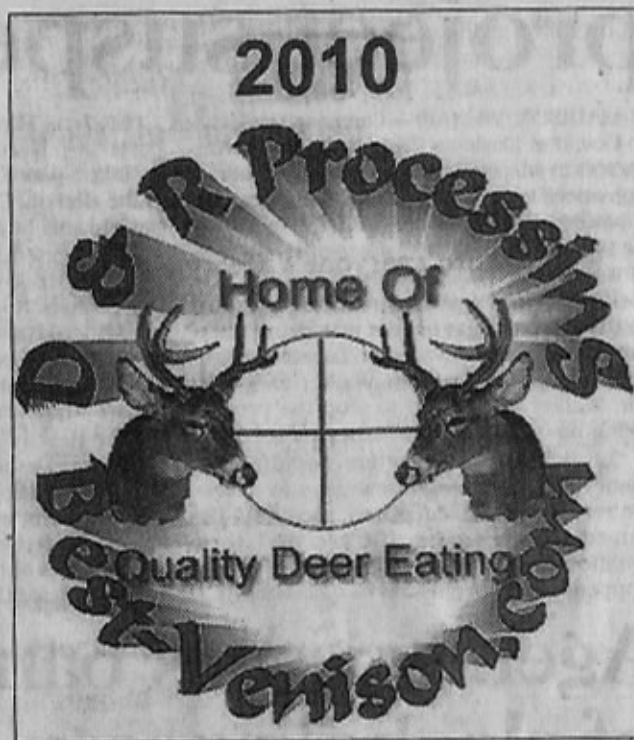
might hang from a tree for a week or two. Back then, venison was much tougher because the diet was much different. Today's deer raid a smorgasbord of farm crops and feast on veggies spread around by baiters and feeders.

"It's a different animal," according to Firnett. "Aging deer back then probably was a good thing because all those deer ate was browse. Hey, the deer of today are not what our grandfather was shooting. These deer basically are eating like a steer feeding in a feed lot. They don't have to browse 24/7 in order to have enough to eat. People need to think of deer the same way they think of beef or fresh meat. If you went to the supermarket and bought a whole chicken, would you hang it in a tree for two weeks?"

When handling deer, Firnett recommends following the three C's — get it clean, get it cold and get it cut.

Firnett said the average price for venison on the market is \$11.50 — mighty pricey.

"Now think about it," Fir-



nett said. "You're gutting it out in the woods. Why would you expect that to be in better condition than beef? Why would you treat something so valuable so poorly?"

D & R Processing offers customers an almost unlimited variety of processing choices. There are eight gourmet roasts, four mari-

nades, gourmet burgers, minute steaks, seven specialty items and more than 50 varieties of fresh sausages. In addition to the videos, the business sells cookbooks, supplies, seasonings, gift packs and gift certificates. For more information, visit www.best-venison.com.