The retail of South African game meat: current trade and marketing trends

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The purchasing and marketing of game meat by supermarkets and butcheries in the Western Cape Province of South Africa was researched by the survey method. Two supermarket groups in South Africa indicated that they do market game meat, and springbok (Antidorcas marsupialis) was the species that most supermarkets sold. Both supermarket groups indicated that they would sell more game meat if available. They also mentioned that a central marketing structure would facilitate the sale of game meat and ensure consistent quality. Thirteen of the twenty butcheries that sell game meat were also in favour of a central marketing structure. The butcheries indicated that consumers are not adequately informed about the health benefits and cooking methods of game meat. Some of the meat buyers at butcheries were ignorant of the qualities of meat that are important when purchasing game meat. It is evident that game meat marketers should exercise stricter control over the quality of game meat, and that supermarkets and butcheries are not promoting game meat extensively enough.

Key words: butcheries, game meat, market trends, retail, supermarkets.

INTRODUCTION

The South African game industry operates as a free-market enterprise, with the advantage that it generates opportunities for individual game ranchers and game meat producers. This, however, creates several problems for producers and consumers alike. In South Africa, for example, there are no standardized cuts or quality standards in place for game meat (Hoffman 2001). Consequently this allows the legal selling of game meat of inferior quality. It is also very difficult for individual farmers to market and sell their game meat profitably, because the volume of meat a single farmer can supply is seldom sufficient to interest wholesalers (Conroy & Gaigher 1982).

Game ranching is a relatively new agricultural industry in South Africa, though already reasonably well established. According to Eloff (2002) South Africa had over five thousand (5061) exempted game ranches in the year 2000. Because South African game animals are free-running, culling mostly takes place by shooting. This raises the issue that correct culling procedures will maintain meat quality, while excessive stress, inaccurate shots, incorrect bleeding and insufficient cooling of carcasses result in meat of an inferior quality (Hoffman 2003).

Eloff (2002) indicated that the prices of some game animals (e.g. springbok, Antidorcas marsupialis, and warthog, Phacochoerus aethiopicus) are declining at live game auctions. South African game ranchers will therefore need to find different utilization methods to increase profit margins (Hoffman 2001). Game meat is generally considered a luxury product and therefore fetches high prices even though individual farmers’ sale of game carcasses is not subject to any regulation (Conroy & Gaigher 1982). According to Hoffman (2001), the major game meat-processing plants in South Africa seldom sell more than 5–8% of their production locally.

Every province in South Africa has its own ‘Hunting Proclamation’. In the Western Cape Province the Hunting Proclamation of the Department of Nature Conservation (1974) regulates the cropping/culling of game animals. This legislation, however, does not restrict the culling/cropping of animals on exempted game ranches. The traditional hunting season is normally during winter when ambient temperatures are cold enough to prevent carcasses from spoiling before being dressed and cooled (Hoffman & Bigalke 1999). This problem can be overcome in summer if farms are equipped with the necessary cooling facilities and animals are collected and dressed immediately after cropping has taken place.
Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environment and are therefore interested in free-range and organic products, as well as products produced by natural methods (Steenkamp 1997). According to Hoffman & Bigalke (1999), game meat can be seen as an organic product, as game meat ranching conforms to the requirements for organic agricultural enterprises.

According to Bakula & Kedzior (2001), the sensory characteristics are the most important quality attributes of meat and meat products. Furthermore, game meat is lower in fat than beef, pork or mutton/lamb and is reported to have an average fat content of between 2% and 3% (Schönfeldt 1993). It is also lower in saturated and higher in polyunsaturated fatty acids than beef (Viljoen 1999).

It is virtually impossible to obtain reliable data on the South African game meat retail industry. Therefore the purpose of this research was to identify current game meat trade in supermarkets and butcheries in order to study the purchasing and marketing of game meat.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

As the objective of this study was to explore the buying and supplying behaviour for game meat, respondents had to sell game meat. Two of the four supermarket groups in South Africa indicated that they sell game meat. The meat market managers of these two supermarket groups for the Western Cape region were therefore interviewed. The other supermarkets indicated that, because of a lack of availability and quality control for high volumes of game meat, they are not willing to sell game meat.

After contacting municipal, provincial as well as national authorities, it was established that no comprehensive list of butcheries exists for the Western Cape area. A list of butcheries was then compiled with the aid of the telephone directories of the Cape Peninsula and Boland areas. Twenty butcheries selling game meat were randomly selected. This respondent group included wholesaler butcheries, as well as privately owned butcheries.

In order to study the trade and marketing trends of South African game meat in South African supermarkets and butcheries, the survey procedure was used. A structured questionnaire was designed with the aid of the dendrogram technique (Schutte 1992). Questions were generated around argumentative factors contributing to the research aim. In order to get maximum control over the respondent's frame of reference and to ensure that response categories are in line with logical responses, different types of questions were used, for example, open questions, closed questions, rank ordering, semantic differential scales and intensity scales. The questionnaire was to be self-administered.

The questions on purchase of game meat by supermarkets and butcheries in the Western Cape were aimed at identifying how they source game meat, what problems they experience in the supply chain of game meat and what type and quality of game meat is available to them. The questions asked on marketing game meat were aimed at identifying who the game meat consumer is, what products are available to the consumer and what promotional activities respondents employ to market game meat (Meisinger 2001). In both the purchasing and marketing surveys, supermarket respondents were asked to indicate which factors they felt were the most important to the purchase and marketing of the meat. In order to identify the importance of the sensory qualities of game meat for consumers, retailers were asked to indicate to what extent a list of qualities is important to the consumer when they buy meat, in comparison with when they buy game meat. In order to establish the price at which game meat is sold, relative to other meat types, retailers were asked to rank six meat types in order of price. Retailers were also asked how they think consumers perceive game meat.

In addition to these questions, butcheries were asked more detailed questions. In order to establish the purchasing pattern of different types of meat by the butchery respondents, they were asked to indicate how often and how much they purchase of the different meat types. The average amount for each meat type that the respondents bought per week was calculated. As the size and turnover of the respondents' butcheries differ, the average percentage of meat that respondents buy per week was calculated for each meat. Respondents were asked to indicate on a list of game species whether they purchase the species often, sometimes/occasionally or never. Respondents had to indicate to what degree they felt a list of factors influenced their purchasing patterns of game meat. The purpose of the questions on the promotion of game meat was to identify what type of information, if any, is provided by the suppliers of game meat to the butcheries, as well as the South
African media to influence or support the purchase of game meat. Respondents were also asked to indicate the popularity of different products of game meat. These game meat products included frozen game meat, game biltong, dried game sausage, fresh game sausage and fresh game meat. Respondents were furthermore asked to indicate the extent to which a list of qualities were perceived to be important to the consumer pertaining to game meat and meat other than game meat (e.g. pork, lamb, chicken). Respondents were asked to indicate which species of game meat they usually sell. Respondents were asked to indicate what they thought consumers see as the positive and negative attributes of game meat.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Supermarkets

For the purpose of this discussion the two supermarket groups will be referred to as Supermarket A and Supermarket B. Both supermarket groups have several stores in the Western Cape region that sell game meat, but neither of the supermarket groups could indicate how many of their stores sell game meat, most probably due to the de-centralized management approach that both supermarket groups practice. They did, however, indicate that stores in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, predominantly inhabited by Afrikaans-speaking consumers, had a higher demand for game meat than the southern suburbs, predominantly inhabited by English-speaking consumers.

Supermarket A indicated that they buy game only in the winter months, end of June to September due to its limited availability at other times. They buy approximately 15,000 kg of fresh game meat, as whole carcasses, twice a week during these months. This supermarket normally buys game meat from a wholesaler that sources game meat from all over South Africa and Namibia. They make use of this supplier as it is usually reliable and delivers game meat directly to the respective stores where it is sold. According to this supermarket, their strongest constraint when buying game meat is its availability. Supermarket A acknowledged that the quality of game meat that they buy is not always consistent. They ascribe this problem to the fact that their volume requirement for game meat is very high, making it difficult to control quality. The qualities that Supermarket A consider important when they purchase game meat include tenderness, colour and correct cuts. Game meat is purchased as whole carcasses and is cut and packaged by the store butchery. This supermarket group gives no special attention to the packaging of game meat. Figure 1 shows the factors that this respondent indicated as playing a role in the purchase of game meat and include: quality, seasonal availability and supplier reliability. The strongest constraining factor identified by the
respondent was the poor availability.

Supermarket B indicated that they buy game meat from March to June each year, with the highest volume bought during May. This supermarket group indicated that although they are able to buy and sell game meat during summer months, they choose to market it during winter, which is perceived as the traditional hunting season. Supermarket B has its own hunting team that crops animals twice a year in Namibia, and the Northern and Western Cape Provinces. The hunting teams harvest 3000 animals from March to June. This supermarket group buys the dressed carcasses, head and skin off and weighed per kilogram, from the farmer. Only animals cropped by headshots are accepted. No carcasses under 16 kg are accepted. The carcasses are transported by the supermarket’s own cooled trucks and distributed to the different stores. The butcheries of each store are responsible for cutting, packaging and promoting the game meat. According to the respondent, supply of game meat to this supermarket is reliable and of constant quality, as enough animals are available and the supplier knows the specifications of this supermarket. The species that are available in large enough amounts for supermarket B to buy are gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*), springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) and kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*). Supermarket B considers the size of game carcasses, the species of game and the price at which it can be obtained as the most important factors to consider when they purchase game meat. The factors that this supermarket group indicated as having a significant influence on the purchase of game meat included the seasonal availability of game meat, species, the respondent’s knowledge of game meat, the supplier and regulations regarding game meat (Fig. 1). No quality standards or standardized cuts for game meat exist in South Africa and the regulations regarding game meat focus on the conservation of species. Supermarket B thus indicated that the latter regulations do not affect their purchasing of game meat.

In the marketing survey Supermarket A rated mutton/lamb as the most expensive meat sold, followed by game meat, ostrich, beef and chicken, with pork the least expensive meat type. The factors that were indicated as having an influence on their sale of game meat included the availability of game meat, the quality of game meat and the seasonal availability of game meat (Fig. 2). They do not know which species of game they buy and thus sell it as venison and not as a specified game species. Game meat is sold as roasts, goulash and sausage. Frozen game meat is not often sold, as it is very unpopular with consumers. The respondent was asked to rate the popularity of different meat types. Lamb/mutton was rated most popular, with pork and beef second, followed by chicken, with ostrich and game meat rated least popular. This agrees with Craford’s (2002) findings that South African consumers prefer lamb, chicken and beef. According to this supermarket, no demand for game meat exists during the summer months. This respondent indicated that consumers consider all buying qualities less important when they buy game meat, in comparison with when they buy other meat types (Fig. 3). The largest difference between qualities for game meat.
meat versus qualities for traditional meat was found for colour. In South Africa game meat is often perceived to be of a dark and unattractive red colour. Apart from stress, another explanation for the darker colour of game meat is the fact that game animals are more active than traditionally farmed animals, causing more myoglobin to build up in the muscles, resulting in a darker red colour (Hoffman 2001). According to this supermarket group, consumers see game meat as a unique, traditionally South African product. Supermarket A further indicated that South Africans perceive game meat as a tough meat type. According to Hoffman (2001), shear force values for impala are similar to those reported for pigs, thus indicating that the tenderness of game meat is similar to that of pork. According to Von La Chevallerie (1970) tenderness of game meat is similar to beef. Consumers are also not aware of the health benefits of game meat. Supermarket A has never done any promotion on game meat and does not supply recipes or suggest preparation methods. This supermarket group has not received complaints from the public about their sale of game meat. They indicated that they do sell all the game meat that they have for sale and would be able to sell 75% more than they currently sell, if more game meat was available to them to purchase. Supermarket A felt that the establishment of a central organization for the marketing and supplying of game meat would result in higher sales of game meat.

Supermarket B ranked mutton/lamb as the most expensive followed by beef, game meat, ostrich and pork, with chicken the least expensive meat type in this supermarket. Factors indicated as having a significant influence on the sale of game meat included the availability of game meat, quality of game meat, the seasonal availability of game meat, species available, fashion, the media and the degree of knowledge that consumers have of game meat (Fig. 2). Crafford (2002) found that only 54% of South Africans are aware of the health benefits associated with game meat, while only 44% of consumers indicated that they know how to prepare and cook game meat. Supermarket B mostly sells springbok and gemsbok, and also occasionally sells kudu. Springbok meat is cut and sold as shoulder, leg, saddle, deboned flank and goulash. Gemsbok and kudu are sold as deboned leg, deboned flank and fillet. Game meat sausage is also sold. Game meat is packed with rinds of streaky bacon in order to enhance the attractiveness of the packaging. Game meat is sold fresh, as according to this respondent, frozen game meat is very unpopular with consumers. Beef was rated most popular, followed by chicken and lamb, pork and game, with ostrich the least popular meat type. The demand for game meat in this supermarket group is high during the start of winter and decreases towards the end of the season. The respondent indicated that this supermarket is able to sell game meat during summer months, but that there would be no interest from the consumer in
buying game meat during this time. Supermarket B has received individual complaints in the past from individual customers who are opposed to their selling of game meat, as these consumers considered the cropping/culling of animals as cruel. This respondent indicated that consumers consider colour, juiciness and degree of ageing less important when they buy game meat, in comparison with when they buy other meat types (Fig. 3). According to Supermarket B, consumers see game meat as a very tasty meat type, with the disadvantage that it can be dry and is difficult to prepare and cook. Although game meat is less succulent than beef because of the low fat content, the moisture content of game meat compares favourably with that of beef and it is therefore incorrect to assume that game meat is less juicy than beef. Supermarket B believes that consumers are aware of the health benefits of game meat and consider game a fashionable meat type to buy, but that consumers are sometimes reluctant to buy it, because they do not know how to cook it. Supermarket B holds each store in their retail chain responsible for its own in-store marketing of game meat. This is done in the format of a competition between the different store butchers, where each butchery of the respective stores must create a promotional exhibit on game meat. Recipe leaflets are also provided and the butcher informs customers on the recommended cooking methods for game meat. This supermarket sometimes supplies game meat to restaurants. According to the respondent, this supermarket group would be able to sell approximately 20% more game meat if more were available to them. Supermarket B’s respondent felt very strongly that the marketing of game meat in general should be improved and that the establishment of a central organization for the marketing of game meat would further improve game meat sales.

Supermarkets A and B have very different approaches in their buying behaviour for game meat. It is apparent that Supermarket A has inadequate quality control over its game meat, as it buys from wholesalers that sell the game meat to them under the generic name and not as a specific species. Supermarket B has more control over the quality of game meat and does more to inform consumers. Both these supermarket groups acknowledge that better marketing of game meat is necessary in order to inform consumers on the positive attributes of game meat. It has to be said, however, that it is apparent that both these super-

![Fig. 4. Average percentage sales of meat types bought per week by butcheries (n = 20) in the Western Cape Province.](image)

markets find it difficult to source large volumes of good-quality game meat and therefore it is understandable that they are not willing to spend a great deal of money on the marketing of a product that they cannot supply to the consumer reliably. Contradictions regarding the availability of game meat were also demonstrated in the study of Crafford (2002), in that restaurant meat buyers indicated that poor availability influenced their marketing of game meat. These restaurant buyers, however, sold most game meat during summer and indicated that they are able to supply their demand of game meat during summer. It is apparent that the supermarkets in this research consider game meat as a seasonal product and will continue to market game meat only during winter.

**Butcheries**

The butcheries that participated in this research all sell fresh game meat for a period of more than one month. Beef, followed by mutton/lamb and pork constituted most of the meat bought per week, while the total amount of game meat purchased amounted to only 11.01% (Fig. 4). This is, however, 7% more than the amount of ostrich and chicken respondents buy per week. The species that are most often available to the butchers included springbok, kudu and gemsbok. Species that are mostly unavailable included bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*), reedbuck (*Redunca arundinum*), red harte-
beest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*), black wildebeest (*Connochaetes gnou*) and zebra (*Equus burchelli*). Springbok was the species that most respondents (*n* = 12) purchase often, while eight respondents purchased springbok occasionally. Half of the respondents often purchased kudu, while seven of the respondents purchased it occasionally and three respondents never purchased it (Fig. 5).

Factors that were highlighted as influencing the purchasing of game meat included distance from the supplier, quality of game meat, seasonal availability of game meat, availability of other meat types, the butcher’s knowledge of game meat and the supplier. The seasonal availability and the effort involved in obtaining game meat were named by 12 of the respondents as the strongest constraining factors, while others indicated the price and the quality of the meat that is available to them as strong restraining factors.

Most of the respondents (85%) indicated that they are aware of the health benefits associated with game meat. A number of qualities considered important when purchasing game meat were named, but no significant similarities were found. The qualities mentioned included freshness (*n* = 5), placement of shot with which the animal was culled (*n* = 3), cleanliness of the meat (*n* = 3), the colour of the meat (*n* = 1), if the carcass was bled and cut correctly (*n* = 3) and the age of the animals (*n* = 5). Twelve of the respondents indicated that the game meat they purchase is of consistent quality. The rest of the respondents indicated that the meat they purchase is not of consistent quality, because animals are sometimes badly shot and sizes of carcasses differ depending on the area they come from. Thirteen of the respondents purchase game meat in the form of carcasses, while five purchase game meat in cuts and two respondents purchase both cuts and carcasses. The respondents who purchase carcasses were asked to indicate how they determine the cuts into which they divide the carcasses. Three of the respondents cut carcasses in the manner requested by customers, while four respondents cut game carcasses similar to that of either mutton or beef. The number of respondents that purchase game meat in each month was calculated (Fig. 6). Differences in the number of butcheries that purchase game meat and sell game meat can be accounted for by the fact that the respondents also sell frozen game meat. Only one of the respondents indicated that game meat was purchased throughout the year (January to December). Fourteen of the respondents have a demand for game meat during the summer months (November to February), while sixteen of the respondents indicated that they are able to obtain game meat during summer.

Promotion involves personal marketing, adver-
Fig. 6. Months of the year that butchery respondents \( n = 20 \) buy and sell game meat.

tising, sales promotions and public relations (Lamb et al. 2001). Ninety-five per cent of the respondents are not aware of any marketing efforts to promote game meat by any form of media. Respondents were asked if they ever receive any promotional information on game meat. Only one of the respondents indicated receipt of any information. The latter respondent indicated that the supplier informs them on the properties of game meat. The respondents were asked how they feel about the establishment of a marketing organization. Thirteen of the respondents felt positive about the establishment of an organization that controls the selling and marketing of game meat and said that this would increase the availability and quality of game meat, improve marketing and educate the consumer. The respondents who felt negative about such an organization indicated that the game industry would become too commercialized, resulting in excessively high prices for game meat.

It is important that an effective distribution channel should be set in place for any product (Lamb et al. 2001). According to Meisinger (2001) the supplier plays an important role in this regard. Most of the butchery respondents (70%) purchase game meat directly from farmers or hunters. The rest of the respondents purchase from abattoirs and wholesalers, while one of respondents indicated that, apart from the game meat they purchase locally, they also import kangaroo meat from Australia. The respondents had to indicate where their main suppliers of game meat are located. Suppliers are located in the Western Cape, Northern Cape, North West and Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and also in Namibia and Zimbabwe. According to 75% of the respondents, their supply of game meat is usually reliable, while four indicated that their supply is unreliable. The respondents who indicated their supply is unreliable said that suppliers often do not deliver on the promised dates and that carcasses differ in size and shot positions where different hunters are used. The respondents were asked to indicate why they make use of specific suppliers. Nine of the respondents indicated that they use a supplier because of the fair prices that are charged, while four respondents indicated that their suppliers are used because of reliability. Three respondents indicated that they use their supplier because it is the only supplier they can find.

According to Meisinger (2001) marketing is vital in any business. The seasonal availability of game meat was the factor that most respondents (80%) indicated as an influence on their sale of game meat. Other factors included the price of game meat and the consumer's degree of knowledge of game meat. Respondents indicated that the media and fashion did not influence their selling of game meat.
meat. As discussed earlier, the contradiction regarding the availability of game meat again emerged.

Consumers often consider price to be the most important variable when making buying decisions. Price is compared to the perceived value of a product (Lamb et al. 2001). Beef was rated as the most expensive meat type, with mutton and game the second and third most expensive. Ostrich and pork followed game meat, with chicken as the least expensive meat type. However, as indicated in Table 1, the current average prices for mutton, beef and game meat in a butchery and supermarket setting differs from that perceived by the butchers. The respondents indicated that the price of game meat has an effect on the selling thereof. Dransfield et al. (1998) studied the effect of information and price index on the consumer selection of steaks and found that consumers preferred buying higher-priced steaks to lower-priced steaks when they had no knowledge of its eating quality. After tasting the steaks, consumers chose the tenderest meat, regardless of its price. This correlates with the findings of Groves (2001), who found that consumers expected more expensive products to be of a higher quality, as well as Verbeke & Viaene (1999), who reported that consumers perceive meat with low prices to have low quality. Dransfield et al. (1998) further conclude that most consumers are not prepared to pay more for meat, when basing their judgement solely on the appearance of meat, but are prepared to pay more for guarantee of quality.

According to Kastner et al. (2001) consumers expect meat products to be of consistent palatability, to be safe and convenient, and to be affordable. Mutton/lamb was rated as the most popular meat type, followed by beef and chicken. Pork meat was the fourth most popular meat type, with game meat and ostrich the least popular meat types. This correlates with the findings of Crafford (2002), who found that consumers rated mutton/lamb as the meat type they were most likely to buy at a butchery. Most respondents indicated game biltong (85%) and dried sausage (80%) as a popular game product. Fifty per cent of the respondents indicated that fresh game meat is a popular meat type. According to the respondents, consumers regard the qualities of smell and ripeness as less important than colour, appearance, tenderness and juiciness for meat other than game. The latter qualities are regarded less important when applied to game meat (Fig. 7). With regard to

<table>
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<th>Species</th>
<th>Cut</th>
<th>Supermarket price (R/kg)</th>
<th>Butchery price (R/kg)</th>
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<td>39.98</td>
<td>35.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>Silverside</td>
<td>36.98</td>
<td>34.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Game meat</td>
<td>Leg</td>
<td>25.98</td>
<td>39.98</td>
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(springbok)  

*August 2002.

![Bar Chart](chart.png)
Fig. 8. Game species usually sold by butchers (n = 20) in the Western Cape.

Packaging, thirteen of the respondents indicated that they give special attention to the packaging of game meat. Four of the respondents indicated that they trim and lard game meat before they package it, while nine respondents vacuum pack the meat.

When asked which species they sell, all of the respondents (100%) usually offer springbok meat, while 85% offer kudu regularly (Fig. 8). Craftord (2002) found that springbok is the game species most consumers have eaten. Von La Chevallerie (1972) found springbok to be the tenderest of the game species and also found that sensory analysis on a number of game species rated springbok to be superior in flavour compared to other game species. It is also interesting to note that these two species are the dominant species found in the regions where the butchers indicated that their game meat suppliers were situated. All of the respondents (100%) offer game meat steaks, while 95% offer leg cuts. It seems that bone-in cuts are not offered regularly (Fig. 9). Most of the respondents (80%) indicated that they sell value-added game meat products. Fifteen of the respondents indicated that they sell game biltong, dried sausage and fresh sausage, while ten of the respondents sell deboned shoulder and nine sell rolled game roasts. Seven of the respondents sell marinaded game fillets and marinaded game kebabs. Other value-added products that the respondents sell include smoked game meat, game meat salami and game carpaccio (thinly sliced raw fillet). Most of the respondents (90%)

Fig. 9. Game meat cuts usually sold by butchers (n = 20).
indicated that they sell more game meat at certain times of the year, with the most game meat being sold during the winter months (June, n = 16; July, n = 17; August, n = 14). These are, however, the months that most of the respondents indicated that they do offer game meat. Two of the respondents indicated that they have a specific demand for game meat during December. This could possibly be linked to the festive season. Six of the respondents, however, indicated that they do sell game meat from January to December. Respondents did not agree on the reasons why more consumers do not purchase game meat. Some of the respondents ascribed this to consumers’ lack of knowledge of cooking methods and positive attributes of game meat, while other respondents said that the taste of game discouraged consumers from purchasing game meat. Other reasons included the high price of game meat and insufficient marketing of game meat. Six of the respondents have had customers who were not in favour of their selling of game meat. Most of these customers thought it cruel to hunt and were therefore opposed to the sale of game meat. According to thirteen of the respondents, consumers are not aware of the health benefits of game meat.

According to the respondents, the positive factors that consumers attribute to game meat include the fact that it is healthy and low in fat, and that its novelty value adds variety to a menu. Negative attributes that were listed include the poor availability of game meat, its high price, a lack of knowledge of cooking and preparation methods for game meat, and the fact that it is sometimes less juicy than other meat types. These conclusions concur with the findings of Crafford (2002) in a study of consumer perceptions of game meat, also conducted in the Western Cape Province.

Eight of the respondents indicated that they have attempted to inform their customers about the benefits of game meat, with six indicating that they have conversations with their customers on game meat, while one respondent labelled game meat sausage with a ‘low-fat’ label and one respondent gave cooking demonstrations on game meat in the butchery. Thirteen of the respondents regard game meat as a fashionable meat type. Fifty per cent of the respondents indicated that they do recommend cooking methods for specific cuts and species of game meat to consumers.

Twelve of the respondents supply game meat to restaurants as well as retail consumers, while eight only sell to retail consumers. Most of the respondents (85%) indicated that some of their clients are hunters. These respondents (n = 17) were asked to indicate what percentage of their game meat-purchasing customers are hunters. The respondents indicated that an average of 14.75% of their game meat-purchasing clients are hunters. Fifteen of the total respondent group indicated that they offer a processing service to hunters for the game meat that they themselves hunt.

CONCLUSIONS
The supermarkets that do sell game meat should improve their sourcing of game meat and apply strict quality control over game meat before comprehensive marketing is undertaken. A market niche for game meat can be created if value-added products are developed that facilitate cooking, and recipes and information are supplied with game meat, as it is apparent that consumers need educating regarding the health aspects and preparation methods for game meat.

There is no quality grading system for game meat in South Africa. The butchery respondents did not agree on the qualities that are important when they purchase game meat. It is therefore possible to conclude that the game meat that butcheries sell is of varying quality. The butchery respondents further indicated that consumers do not consider the quality of game meat as important as that of other meat types. There is no reason why good-quality game meat should not be subject to the same quality standards of other meat types. It can thus be concluded that consumers are uneducated regarding the sensory qualities of game meat, and because the meat that retailers such as butcheries and supermarkets sell varies in quality, consumers are led to believe that they should expect game meat to be of poor quality.

Consumers are poorly educated regarding the health aspects and preparation methods of game meat. As there is no organization that controls the marketing of game meat, it is presently the responsibility of supermarkets and butcheries that sell game meat to inform consumers and market game meat. However, as the game meat industry grows, this aspect will need to be addressed.

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