

Reindeer Liver Makes Fine Source for Vitamin Pills

Reindeer liver from the herd at Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island is being used in the manufacture of vitamin tablets in Santa Rosa, California.

"The reason is the reindeer doesn't get any feed additives like hormones as do other ruminants like cattle," said Ed Nygard, Land Operations Officer for Juneau Area Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

"The animal eats native forage—a strictly native vegetation," he added.

Outside of the one-third of

the 2,000 to 2,500 animals slaughtered annually at Mekoryuk that go to the Kuskokwim Delta area, the balance goes to Anchorage, some to Seattle and some of it is distributed to specialty firms in other states.

A firm in Chicago buys it for specialty meat. A ski resort in Colorado buys reindeer meat for its customers. Some firms in New York acquire it as a specialty item.

Boneless reindeer meat is sent to Casper, Wyoming for sausages. A supply of it is sent to Anteaters Club in

Washington, D.C.

"This club gets meat from all over the world," said Nygard. "The members try anything. From Nunivak, they order tongues and hind quarters for special dinners."

Nygard, along with Medford D. Abbot, Agricultural Extension Specialist for the Bethel District, was in Bethel last week helping to prepare for the annual slaughter at Mekoryuk that will commence about August 1 and last through the middle of September.

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Reindeer . . .

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"There is a great demand for red meats in Japan," said Nygard. "We were contacted last week by Japanese who wanted reindeer meat. That country could be a real good outlet for the Seward Peninsula area. We want to work toward the development of this market."

The herd on Nunivak Island numbers 12,000 and the meat from the slaughtering facility there is the only one that has the State of Alaska inspection. Nygard and Abbott said the government herd on the island sells in areas where the Seward Peninsula herders do not sell.

Preparation for annual slaughtering operation starts in June. When the actual operation begins, both men and women and young people work. About 120 people from Mekoryuk are employed and the payroll runs about \$46,000 a season. According to Nygard, welfare in Mekoryuk is minimal as a result of the reindeer operation there.

The slaughtering plant has been in operation since 1944. The carcasses are shipped to markets on the BIA supply ship North Star III.