

Abstract

Awareness and Understanding Amongst New Zealand Health Professionals of Venison in a Healthy Diet [†]

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New Zealand (NZ) farmed venison is available for NZ consumers, and exported globally, including to Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and the United States of America (USA). It is a notably lean meat, low in saturated fat and particularly high in iron. However, it is not commonly consumed in the NZ diet and the understanding and awareness of venison amongst health professionals has not been researched.

An online survey was delivered to NZ health professionals to gain a deeper understanding of their perception of venison. The survey contained closed and open-ended questions to give quantitative results and qualitative insights. The respondents were targeted through professional membership organisations. The survey aimed for 80 respondents and achieved 106, predominantly dietitians, nutritionists and nurses.

One third were undecided (neutral) about whether they perceived meat as important for health. Almost 40% believed their clients were not following NZ Ministry of Health guidelines on protein with reasons relating to quantity and poor-quality choices, with limited variety. Specifically relating to meat, only 43% believed their clients generally made quality choices. Some respondents were concerned meat intakes are inadequate in sub-groups including young women and elderly.

Most respondents, 80%, were aware of venison however only 56% believed they had a reasonable understanding of the nutritional attributes. The key reason to recommend venison was its high iron level, followed by being low in fat. The main barrier to recommendation was cost, followed by a lack of knowledge about venison. The majority of respondents, 81%, wanted more information on the nutrient content of venison and preparation and cooking information. 44% wanted to understand more about farming practices.

NZ farmed venison can deliver quality nutrition in small quantities. NZ health professionals are interested in more information and these insights will be used to inform future resource materials.

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