



## **Response to Written Question**

**Asked by: John Main , MLA for Arviat North-Whale Cove**

**Asked of: Hon. Joe Savikataaq, Minister of Environment**

**Number: 52-5(2)**

**Date: November 7, 2019**

**Subject: Sales of Caribou Meat**

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### **Notes for background information**

NOTE 1: The department's wildlife management system (including licensing, record keeping, etc.) operates on a year that begins on July 1 and ends on June 30. The responses below are based on this and not the calendar year

NOTE 2: At present there is only one licenced meat dealer, located in Rankin Inlet. They keep records of purchases, but these records do not track which herd a caribou came from. It is believed, based on the location and season of the harvesting, that the vast majority of the caribou purchased by the dealer are from the Qamanirjuaq herd.

NOTE 3: The records kept by licenced meat dealers do not track the quantity of meat purchased, but rather the number of caribou. On average a cleaned and skinned caribou weighs approximately 55 kilograms or 121 pounds.

NOTE 4: The Department of Environment does not track the number of caribou sold by licenced dealers, but rather the number purchased. It is assumed that all caribou they purchase are re-sold.

NOTE 5: The department is not aware of any retailers that obtain caribou from harvesters for resale. The department is aware that a number of retailers and restaurants obtain caribou from the licenced meat dealer located in Rankin Inlet.

**Question:**

*1: For the calendar years 2017, 2018, and 2019 to date, and divided by region and/or caribou herd, whichever is more appropriate:*

- a) What was the estimated quantity of caribou meat sold through conventional commercial channels (e.g. meat plants and retail stores)?*

**Response:**

Number of caribou purchased by licenced meat dealers:

2017/18: 375

2018/19: 559

2019/20: 0 (purchasing not yet started for the current year).

**Question:**

- b) What was the estimated quantity of caribou meat sold through informal channels (e.g. social media-facilitated sales and/or direct sales between individuals)?*

**Response:**

The department is unable to provide an estimate of sales through informal channels.

**Question:**

- c) What methodology did the department utilize in providing responses to questions 1(a) and 1(b)?*

**Response:**

The department reviewed the records kept by licenced meat dealers.

**Question:**

- d) What information does the department require to accurately and comprehensively track the quantities of caribou meat being sold in Nunavut?*

**Response:**

The department requires licenced meat dealers to keep records of the species and quantity purchased. There is no requirement for individuals to keep records of or report sales or purchases of legally harvested wildlife like caribou.

**Question:**

*2: Based on the department's best available information, what are the price ranges paid for:*

*a) A whole caribou?*

**Response:**

Based on observations of social media and general knowledge of individual department staff, whole caribou seem to sell for between \$300 and \$1000 per animal, with the most common price being \$500.

**Question:**

*b) A kilogram of caribou meat?*

**Response:**

Given that the average weight of a cleaned and skinned caribou is 55 kilograms, the price for a kilogram would be between \$5.45 and \$18.18, with the average being approximately \$9.09.

**Question:**

*3: What specific actions has the Department taken to better track sales of caribou meat?*

**Response:**

The department has not taken any actions to track sales of caribou meat, as records of financial transactions are not accessible.

The department has taken the following actions to track shipments of caribou meat: Conservation Officers have worked on a local level within their communities to encourage harvesters voluntarily submit information; the department has contacted airlines and asked that they provide records of the weights of caribou shipped by individuals; and a pilot project in one community has stickers attached to packages of caribou meat being shipped by air, making them readily identifiable.

**Question:**

*4: What is the trend in territory-wide caribou meat sales, and what specific factors are contributing to this trend?*

**Response:**

The recent trend seems to have been a steep increase in sales/shipments beginning in about 2014/2015, when the population of caribou in the Qikiqtaaluk region dropped so low that it could not meet local needs. The current trend is unknown, but is suspected to be stable or increasing.

The factors believed to be contributing to this trend are:

- Low numbers of caribou in some parts of Nunavut, especially the Qikiqtaaluk region.
- High demand for caribou meat in some parts of Nunavut, especially the Qikiqtaaluk region, combined with a willingness by many people to pay relatively high prices.
- Generally high numbers of caribou available to harvesters in some parts of Nunavut, particularly in the Kivalliq and parts of the Kitikmeot.
- High prices and the knowledge among harvesters that there is substantial money to be made from harvesting and selling caribou.

**Question:**

*5: What specific information concerning the transportation of country food (including, but not limited to, caribou meat) is currently being reported to the department by commercial airlines operating within Nunavut, and what information is currently not being reported?*

**Response:**

No information concerning the transportation of country food is currently being reported to the department by any commercial airline operating within Nunavut.

**Question:**

*6: To the department's knowledge, what specific examples of actions to regulate the private sale of caribou meat have been undertaken, or are currently being undertaken, by individuals and/or organizations, including but not limited to, Hunters and Trappers Organizations?*

**Response:**

The department is not aware of any examples of such actions.

Thank you once again for your questions, and please feel free to contact my office should you have further questions regarding this matter.