

## ELK Is the Essential Zero-Carb Alternative

Minnesota farmers are zeroing in on the market for elk with an eye toward the growing demand for elk meat products. With the help of organizations like the Minnesota Elk Breeders' Association, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), and Minnesota Grown, farmers are benefiting from broad support as they start up or expand elk operations, in part to meet increasing demand for lean, high-protein, low-cholesterol meats.

In a carb-conscious age, protein is king and the monarch of meat is elk. The nutritional advantages of elk point to a diet solution for meat lovers who are concerned about fat and cholesterol. In a USDA comparison, elk comes out on the statistical top in key nutritional categories. Its high-protein, low-fat, low-cholesterol characteristics make it the healthiest of all the common meats in America.

Meat	Calories	Fat (grams)	Cholesterol (milligrams)	Protein (grams)
Elk	146	1.9	73	30.2
Chicken	190	7.4	89	28.9
Beef	211	9.3	86	29.8
Pork	212	9.7	86	29.3

*(A comparison of fat, calories, cholesterol, and protein reveals the significant statistical advantages of elk.)*

### Elk Is A Family Value

“Our family has been enjoying elk for years,” says Brenda Hartkopf, of the Minnesota Elk Breeder’s Association and enthusiastic elk rancher. “Long before Atkins and South Beach, elk has been our red-meat staple,” she adds. The first thing that comes to Brenda’s mind when she thinks of elk is *lean*. “We feel good about raising it for sale and serving it to the whole family and to our friends.”

Pound for pound, elk is easier on farmers and on the environment than other livestock. “Production analysis shows that elk cost 66% less than cattle to keep happy and healthy,” says Hartkopf. “We can raise three elk cows on the feed it takes to raise one beef cow,” she adds. Elk are a hearty livestock with natural immunity to most diseases, so antibiotic use is rare. Growth hormones are not used in elk production because there are no proven benefits.

Demand for elk is strong enough to drive infrastructure development to support growing supplies of steaks and specialty meats like summer sausage and elk jerky. “Our focus for the next several years is to grow the market for elk,” says Jim Byrne, President of the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association. “Right now most restaurant elk is red deer from New Zealand because U.S. elk numbers have been too small to meet demand. We’re going to change that,” he added.

In the meantime, the Hartkopfs and other elk lovers enjoy their premium elk down on the farm.

For more information about America’s Greatest Animal and the new *Cooking with Elk* recipe book, contact the Minnesota Elk Breeder’s Association at [info@mneba.org](mailto:info@mneba.org) or <http://www.mneba.org>.