

NEWS RELEASE

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Minnesota still first in U.S. in elk production *Survey of industry shows significant growth in five years*

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Minnesota continues to lead the nation in elk production according to just released results of a National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) survey. The NASS survey, conducted in October 2006, found 9,921 farmed elk are registered in Minnesota with an average value of \$1,683 per head. The reported total value of the elk inventory was \$13 million dollars.

Minnesota elk farmers also produce over 25 percent of the entire amount of velvet antler produced in the United States which is estimated to be 20 tons. Velvet antler is sold for use as a nutritional supplement in North America and exported for use in traditional Chinese medicine.

Minnesota was also the leader in U.S. elk production when the first survey of the state's industry was conducted five years ago. The total number of elk operations is up slightly to 280 compared to 264 operations in 2001. The elk inventory was down slightly from 10,966 farmed elk in 2001, to 9,921 farmed elk in 2006.

Minnesota Elk Breeders Association President Jim Byrne of Pine Island said the elk industry has seen major diversification through the sale of velvet antler, direct marketing of meat and the sale of elk bulls to preserves in Minnesota and elsewhere in the U.S.

“Our markets are diverse and this has allowed us to adjust to shifts in the market focus,” said Byrne. “Minnesota is ideal for elk with excellent pasture land and climate that make raising these magnificent animals on smaller acreages more feasible,” he said.

Byrne said vital marketing opportunities have also helped the Minnesota elk industry grow.

“We have great support from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Board of Animal Health and the Minnesota Grown program and we're looking forward to many more years of successful operation,” Byrne said.

To view the complete elk survey, go to:

http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Minnesota/Publications/Livestock_Press_Releases/index.asp

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This release is available on the MDA website at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us>

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