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POLISH WILD GAME FOREIGN TRADE - HARES

Abstract: *This article introduces population of hares, the second most numerous species of wild game in Poland. In 1970-2009 the hare population decreased from 3.204.031 to 534.034 heads. The hare foreign trade data was introduced for the years of 2004, 2005 and 2009. Within those years the income from the hare export increased by about 75% and came out to 748.000 Euros (in 2009). At the same time the import spending decreased by about 10% and amounted to 40.000 Euros. As a result, the balance of the foreign trade came out to 708000 Euros (in 2009) in comparison to 147000 Euros (in 2007). In 2009 most of the hares were sold to Great Britain and purchased from Germany.*

Key words: *hares, population, foreign trade balance, export, import*

Introduction

The most common and the most numerous wild game mammals in Poland are the deer. Second place is taken by the hares. They live all over Europe, except for Norway and northern parts of Sweden, Finland and former Soviet Union (Pielowski, 1979).

Hares can be found on the farmlands and less often in the forests. In Poland they are hunted by 90% of the hunters. They are the specie that secures the existence of most of the hunting circles in our country, due to the catching and the sales of life hares to the Western Europe countries (Dziedzic and assoc., 2000).

Material and methods

Data collected for the years of 2004, 2007 and 2009 applicable to the export and import was received from the Department of Agricultural Markets. The information about the hares' population and hunting were obtained from The Polish Hunting Association. Hare population data is based on the hunting breeding plans and mostly on the year round observations (Pielowski, 1979).

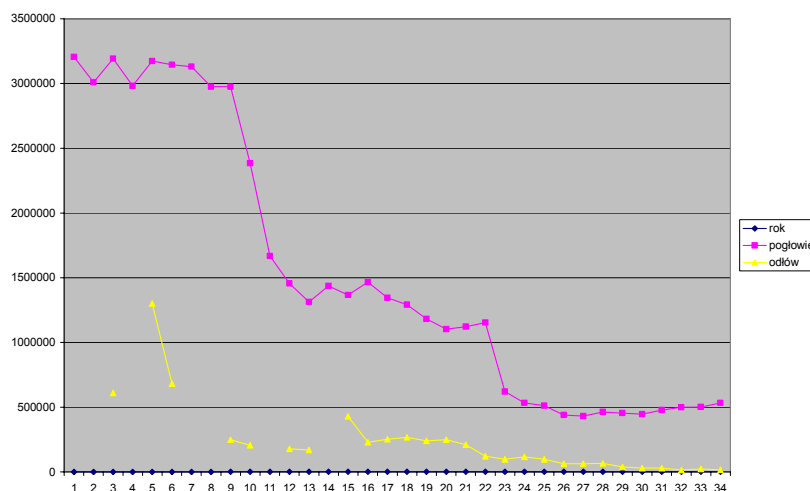
For the comparison purpose, the value of export and import was calculated in kilograms. The collected data was illustrated with the charts.

Results of researches

Hares live alone and they couple only during the breeding period. Mating lasts from the middle of January through August. Each year one female can have 3 to 4 litters with 2 to 5 young each. First litter takes place in March, bunnies are born strong and animated, with open eyes and covered with the fur. Their bodies do not have a smell, which makes them safe from predators. Mother spends the day outside the burrow and

comes back at night to feed the young with her milk. Bunnies are very sensitive to dampness and fall victims to the predators. When they mature, they weigh between 2,5 and 6 kilograms and their life span is 5 to 6 years.

Chart 1. The hare population within the years of 1970-2009 and number of catches in 1985-2009.



Hare population varied throughout the years, what is shown in the hunting statistics. After the World War II hare population was increasing and in 1974/1975 season peaked, what is shown in the chart 1. The population decreased drastically from 3.172.817 heads in 1975 down to 534.034 in 2009. Starting in 1978 population of hares was on a decline every year. There were many factors influencing the decrease in numbers, like changes in agriculture, mechanization, chemization, abandonment of crop rotation, increase of the numbers of predators, diseases, climate conditions, hunting and poaching.

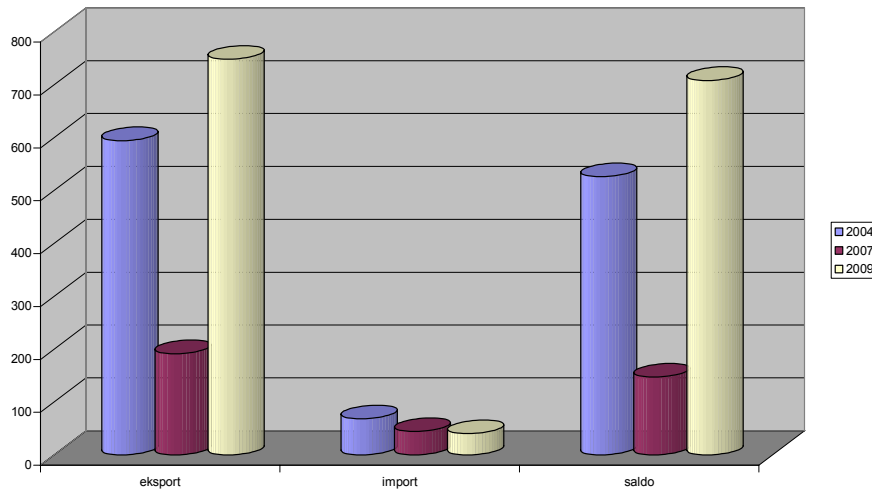
Within the years of 1981-1991 hare population established at 1300000 – 1100000. Steep decrease in numbers in 1980 was caused by the severe winter and the shortage of food. Another decrease in population took place in 1997 down to 620000 (from 1154000 in 1990) (Dziedzic and assoc. 2000).

In the 1970s biggest concentration of hares was observed in central, southern and partially northern Poland (Pielowski and oth. 1993). By the end of the 1980s decade and in the beginning of 1990s it was hard to pinpoint the regions of the highest concentration. In the late 1990s the population and territory situation of the species worsened. In the most recent years largest numbers of hares are found in central Poland. Since the year of 2000 the population is systematically growing, thanks to actions taken by people. The animals are bred and nurtured in captivity and than freed in the regions, where their population is the weakest.

With the changes in population, the numbers of commercial catches changes as well. According to Pielowski and Pinkowski (1995) the important element of the hare population management is the assessment of the value of the gain. It should be equal to

20% of the fall population level determined by the stocktaking. Up until the year of 2000 using this method allowed to gain about 20% of the population. In following years the share of catches systematically decreased from 15% (in 2001) down to slightly above 3% (in 2009).

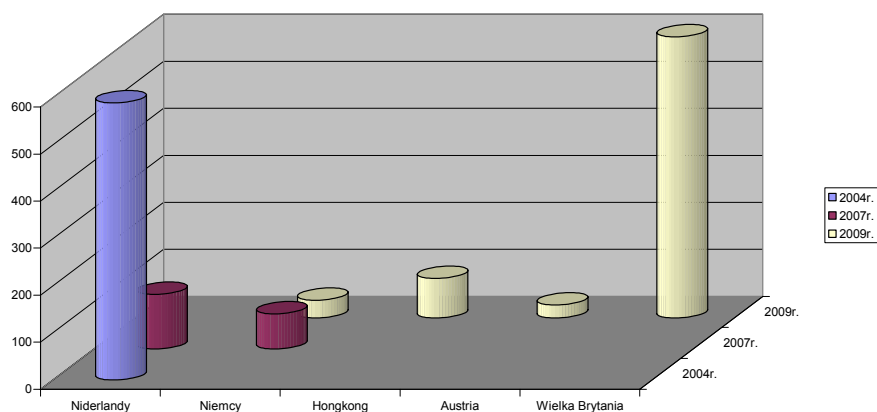
Chart 2. Hare foreign trade turnover



The highest numbers of hares were hunted in 1974, about 1,300,000. Within last 10 hunting seasons those numbers decreased 5 times (from 98,000 heads in 2000 to 17,600 in 2009).

In Poland, within the last year the most hunted species were wild bore (200000 heads), deer (143000) and fox (139000). Hares were the sixth most hunted while their population is the second largest. In 2009 positive balance in the foreign trade in hares came up to 708000 Euros and was 80% higher than in 2007 and 26% higher than in 2003 (chart 2). Increase in the balance was caused by the higher value of the hare export. In 2009 hare export was higher than in the previous years and amounted to 698 tons of meat. In 2004 -129 tons was sold and in 2007 only 55 tons. The highest price for a kilogram of meat was reached in 2004 (4,61 Euros) and the lowest in 2009 (1,07 Euro). The decrease in price was undoubtedly caused by the economical crisis that affected many countries. Hares were mainly sold to the EU countries, although last year a new client emerged from Hong Kong (chart 3). In the 70s hunting circles caught annually close to 100 thousands live hares that were being exported to Italy and France. In recent years sales to those countries dropped and hares were sold mainly to UK.

Chart 3. Polish export of hares to different geographical locations (thousands of Euros)



The hare export decreases every year and in 2009 amounted to about 6 tons. It was close to the 2007 level (7 tons) and in comparison to 2004 (16 tons) it was lower by 64%. The average price reached 7.09 Euros and was higher than in 2007 (6,33 Euros/kg) and higher than in 2004 (4,32 Euros). In 2004 hares were imported from Belgium (95%) and in following years from Germany (95% of hares imported)

Conclusions

1. In Poland hare population decreased from 3204031 heads in 1970 to 534034 in 2009. There were many factors negatively influencing the specie. Amongst the most important we should mention predators, deceases, climate conditions, chemization and mechanization of the agriculture, hunting and poaching.
2. In 2009 positive trade balance reached 708000 Euros and was 80% higher than in 2007. The balance increase was caused by the growth of income from the export at the minimal decrease of import spending.
3. Within last year hares were sold to UK (80% of the export), Hong Kong (11%) and Austria (5%) and purchased in Germany (90% of the import).

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Summary

This article introduced the population of hares within the years of 1970-2009 and the balance and size of the hare trade with geographical directions. The hare population decreased from 3204031 heads in 1970 to 534034 in 2009. The export income increased by about 75%, to the figure of 748000 Euros (in 2009). The import spending decreased by about 10%, down to 40,000 Euros. As a result, the foreign trade balance came out to 708000 Euros (in 2009), in comparison to 147000 (in 2007). In the year of 2009 majority of hare was sold to UK and purchased in Germany.