

Only One Carrion Per Passenger

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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Last week I wrote about the impending government sequestration that will result in the USDA furloughing meat inspectors. The furloughs will likely result in meat shortages, meaning I will either have to become a vegetarian or learn to hunt.

While I was an avid marksman in the original Nintendo 'Duck Hunt' video game, I probably wouldn't fare well as a hunter in real life, especially since I don't own a gun. I am a pretty good driver, however, so if the meat shortage truly becomes a crisis, I could always move to Montana.

The House of Representatives for the Treasure State passed a bill earlier this month that allows motorists to eat their roadkill. Introduced by State Representative Steve Lavin, the measure would allow drivers to harvest as food "game animals, fur-bearing animals, migratory game birds and upland game birds" that they kill with their vehicles. While this would unfortunately exclude my favorite animals, namely cows, pigs and chickens, according to Lavin, the bill would include "deer, elk, moose and antelope, the animals with the most meat."

In addition to the tastiest animals, the law would also specifically exclude animals drivers would seek out to profit from, such as big horn sheep and bear, whose horns, claws and other body parts could be sold. Lavin also clarified that the law wouldn't apply to situations like "finding a dead squirrel in the middle of the road" either. Once run over, they're too hard to filet anyway.

One of my best friends in law school was from Wisconsin's north woods, and he was an avid hunter. He would routinely invite us over for venison steak or goose dinners. While enjoying a tender quail, he casually informed us, "Oh yeah, I accidentally nailed it with my truck on the way back from Christmas break." I guess whether by ax, bullet or Chevrolet, once cooked, all of his meals were equally delicious.

Lavin would agree. Aside from being a state representative, he is also a state trooper. While on patrol, Lavin indicated that he sees numerous animals hit on Montana's highways that he claims could be repurposed to provide meat for people in need. Montana state troopers already alert food banks of such opportunities. If Governor Steve Bullock signs Lavin's bill into law, such practices would be legal.

Montana is not the first state to introduce such a measure. Colorado, Illinois and Indiana currently allow motorists to salvage roadkill under certain circumstances. Harvesting roadkill is also legal in Georgia, as seen on the reality show, "Here Comes Honey Boo Boo." On the show, "Mama June" Shannon is actually notified by the police whenever a struck deer is found on the side of the road. Mama June explained, however, that her family does not eat possum or raccoon, as that would be uncouth.

Drivers in Wisconsin can claim a hit deer if they obtain a tag from a law enforcement officer. A proposal for other game was introduced in the State Assembly.

I wonder if AutoZone sells cow-catchers for minivans.