

says Hayward. “You get a farmer who now has neighbours who are saying, ‘I want to get a side or hind of beef,’ so now he’s trying to go into these provincial abattoirs and they’re just getting swamped.”

With the increased pressure on abattoirs, some hunters may be giving up on making use of their kill. However, Keith Munro, wildlife biologist at Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, says that under the Fish & Wildlife Conservation Act, “it is illegal to allow flesh that is suitable for human consumption to spoil. That is a serious offence.”

Len & Patti’s has been so packed, they’ve had to forward some game meat to Nesbitt’s, and they are currently facing backlogs too. Thurston said in hunting season last year, she took about 100 calls for meat storage, and for this season, she has about 20 calls a day and has to turn them away.

Hayward said he used to prepare one or two sides of beef a month, and now he does two or three a week. Len & Patti’s and Nesbitt’s work together in certain areas, and they are both currently too backed up to take in most meat.

Munro, the wildlife biologist, said even if a hunter can’t get their catch processed due to these backlogs, it is still a serious offence to let that meat rot. What adds to the problem is the recently warm weather when it’s usually colder during hunting season, making non-refrigerated catch rot faster while abattoirs are backed up.

Thurston pointed out that if some people get their meat processed from a smaller operation, such as a private butcher or someone’s house, they don’t have the same kind of disposal facility.

As Kelly Maloney, agriculture development officer of Kawartha Lakes, points out, a provincially licenced abattoir or butcher shop has a service for the bones and scrap for it to go to rendering. Rendering is the process of converting animal carcasses into useful by-products, like feed protein. But since this is all backed up, the pressure is building on the whole system.

“We call waste disposal companies that will take the items,” says Thurston, “but those other companies don’t have access to that because a lot of times you have to have a contract in order to get them to do a pick-up or you have to be able to get them to pick up a certain amount.”

Otherwise, hunters get stuck with items they can’t get processed or properly disposed of, and Hayward said some people would rather dump them on the road than go to landfills to properly dispose of them when there’s a large wait.

Munro’s advice is if a hunter is caught in one of these situations, they should talk to their local butcher about what to do since they are the experts, but the conditions vary from hunter to hunter.

“In terms of disposal, you can discard it on crown land, away from trails for courtesy, and on private land with the land owner’s

GO TO
TOP