

Food shops in east London caught selling DEAD RATS as undercover probe reveals illegal meat trade

- **West African delicacies like charred sheep skin also being sold at Ridley Road Market in Dalston, east London**
- **BBC undercover team finds six butchers are selling illegal 'bush meat'**
- **Fears that the food, which break UK food safety rules, could also make shoppers ill**

By Martin Robinson

An undercover investigation has revealed a shocking trade in illegal 'bush meat' at a London market - including the sale of dead rats for human consumption. Charred sheep skins, another favourite in west Africa known as 'smokies', are also being sold by butchers at the Ridley Road market in Dalston, east London. A BBC investigation using hidden cameras uncovered at least six butchers selling the illegal meats, breaking UK food safety laws.



Appetising? This grab from the BBC's secret filming during their investigation purports to show a Ridley Road Market trader selling illegal cane rat meat



Illicit trade: The animals are not cleared for human consumption in the UK and it is feared they may be contaminated

The show will air this evening and will horrify many who have been buying meat from these stalls and shops, with experts warning the food chain could be contaminated. West African and environmental health sources said the market was known for illicit meat.

But a Freedom of Information request to Hackney council revealed that the last time its enforcement officers visited traders about illegal meat was in 2009. Paul Povey, a member of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, said: 'I am just so shocked. It's all illegal and hasn't undergone health control, hasn't been inspected and may well be contaminated.'



Denials: When confronted by BBC journalists, all those filmed secretly denied selling the illicit meat



Bush meat: Cane rats and 'shocking' quantities of illegal and 'potentially unsafe' meat have been sold to the public in east London, a BBC London undercover investigation has found

The butchers were filmed preparing to sell smokies, which are made by using a blow torch on the skin of a sheep or goat to give it a charred flavour.

Confronted with the evidence gathered by the BBC, Islam Halal Meat, Punjab Halal Meat and Fish, and Dalston Butchers denied they were selling illegal meat.

The practice is outlawed under UK and European food laws for reasons of public safety and animal welfare.

Dr Yunes Ramadan Teinaz, a chartered environmental health practitioner, said: 'Behind the illicit trade in smokies are criminals who don't observe the law and are just after financial gain.'

'It is disgusting and outrageous that the local authorities don't take action and remove this meat from the human food chain.'



Shocking: Butchers at Ridley Road Market in Dalston were filmed selling illegal 'bush meats' - including rats

One Hackney butcher sold a researcher some of the illicit meat and said: 'Don't tell anyone, otherwise there will be trouble.'

Two African food stores were selling the grasscutter rats, described as having been imported from Ghana.

There is no suggestion that every butcher in Ridley Road was prepared to deal in illegal meat.

The manager of food store Great Expectations, which allegedly sold two Ghanaian rats, said: 'I don't sell rats, I never sell rats, I don't sell rats. I don't have any rats, why you come to video me?'

The manager of Adom Trading also denied selling bush meat. 'What you are saying is a lie, a 100 per cent lie, I don't sell rats,' she said.



Accused: Dalston Butchers was one of the shops accused of selling the meat - but they denied it



Sting: BBC undercover reporters filmed various stores selling the foo, which breaks UK food safety rules

Councillor Feryal Demirci, Hackney Council's Cabinet Member for Safer Neighbourhoods said: 'Hackney Council's team of Environmental Health Officers make regular visits and inspections of over 1,000 businesses across the borough, including those on Ridley Road.

'Since 2009, we have only received a single complaint regarding the sale of illegal meat, which upon investigation was inconclusive.

'However, we take all complaints seriously and we will always investigate fully. Now that we have received some information from the BBC we will look into this and take the appropriate

action.

'If anybody else has any concerns, they should contact the Council's Environmental Health Team straight away on 020 8356 8438.'

The investigation will be aired on BBC London News at 6.30pm today on BBC 1.