



New Project to Focus on Improving Low Ground Venison Supply Chain

A new venison project launching this month will explore ways to help low ground deer managers improve the infrastructure for handling and chilling venison carcasses and increase throughput. The pilot project will assess additional potential outlets for the venison produced, and interrogate any barriers for these initiatives, as well as possibilities for part-funding of small and micro-scale chillers.

The £119k pilot fund, secured by NatureScot and SAOS (the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society) will see SAOS working closely with Lowland Deer Network Scotland and Scottish Venison.

Funding of up to 50% of capital costs will be available to successful applicants. Application for funding is through a straightforward process, with an assessment panel then selecting successful projects.

John Bruce, Chair of Lowland Deer Network Scotland, explained their initial involvement: “LDNS undertook a survey asking deer managers about their vital venison handling capacity, in particular their chilling requirements. We had 125 responses, with 70 requiring support for improved facilities, six looking to open commercial processing facilities, and the remainder seeking access to simple approved facilities which would permit their carcasses to advance into the public food chain. These people estimated that their cull could increase by 1,000 animals a year with these improvements. This new pilot project will make a positive contribution to addressing the issues.”

Pete Moore of the NatureScot Wildlife Management Team added: “Over the last few months, we have listened to the views of the deer management sector about the need to increase funding for venison supply chains, particularly in low ground parts of Scotland. This pilot scheme is a positive step forward and will provide direct support to deer managers in these areas to improve infrastructure and increase venison production, with the potential for this to feed into the wider market. The project should also give us further insight into the possibilities, and potential barriers, for improvements to the low ground venison supply chain in future.”

Richard Cooke, Chairman of Scottish Venison, commented on the project’s potential: “This is an excellent initiative, building on the work already underway with the three pilot chill projects in Dumfries & Galloway, North Argyll, and Moray, which are supported through the Covid Recovery Fund. It is also absolutely in line with the Scottish Venison strategy to develop capacity for safe and legal collection, chilling, and processing of venison locally across Scotland’s low ground, with a view to increasing the harvest of venison from our roe deer population and getting that to market as a priority. We look forward to seeing some interesting projects coming forward for support.”

The scheme is open for submissions from stalkers and groups from January 31st and will run until March 20th, with successful applicants notified by the end of March.

SAOS staff are available to help with applications, initial enquiries should be directed to <mailto:venison@saos.coop>

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NatureScot: NatureScot is Scotland's nature agency. We work to enhance our natural environment in Scotland and inspire everyone to care more about it. Our priority is a nature-rich future for Scotland and an effective response to the climate emergency. For more information, visit our website at www.nature.scot

Lowland Deer Network Scotland: LDNS is a defined network and forum in which lowland deer managers have a voice and national representation. It provides a mechanism to sense check and ground truth, with lowland land managers and deer stalking practitioners, the new areas of policy development and changing legislation against a backdrop of the increased focus on loss of biodiversity and the climate emergency. LDNS is essential to help facilitate information exchange and provide opportunities to improve awareness around changes to legislation, policy, best practice for venison and the management of deer.

Scottish Venison is the representative organisation for private and public sector, producer and processor, upland and lowland, and wild and farmed venison interests in Scotland. More information at www.scottish-venison.info

SAOS was established as a Society to further co-operation in Scottish agricultural organisations in 1905. While co-operation remains key, this remit has expanded to strengthen the position of Scotland's farming and rural businesses in their supply chains, through innovation, technology, data, quality assurance and climate change response. SAOS is a co-op, owned by around 60 member co-operatives whose collective turnover is nearly £1.5 billion.

ALL ENQUIRIES TO venison@saos.coop