

Venison



The Scottish Highlands are one of the last “wilderness” areas of Europe with its wild game and deer free to roam at will over massive areas. Traditionally hunted for food by the Scottish people, game and venison has long been a seasonal staple of the Highlanders diet. Wild venison is what it says on the label – wild. Born and living an unrestricted life, free to roam where it likes and eat what it likes with no direct human interference – as nature intended. Farmed venison by contrast is kept in enclosed fields and farmed in much the same way as sheep are. Because of its restricted diet and lifestyle the venison does not acquire the natural flavour that wild has through its wide diet range and active lifestyle. Also, wild venison is shot in its own environment with little or no stress attached to its killing. Farmed venison by contrast has to be taken to a slaughter house to be killed and dressed thereby leading to increased stress levels. Because of the lack of stress in its life, and in the manner in which it is killed, wild venison is invariably tender.

Obviously it is in the interests of the landowners that deer are managed in a sustainable manner so that neither the deer nor the environment suffer. In the absence of natural predators it is important that numbers are controlled so that a healthy herd is maintained with a natural balance of sexes and ages. This task is undertaken by resident professional deer stalkers employed by the estates and it is these stalkers who through their knowledge of their deer decide how many and which deer should be culled each year to maintain the status quo.

The most humane way of culling wild deer is with a high powered rifle and any person involved in the cull must be able to demonstrate their competence and accuracy prior to going to the hill. Stalking follows very traditional lines and is undertaken during the seasons laid down by law designed to allow deer the peace and quiet that they need to give birth and rear their young.

When the deer carcass arrives at the Approved Wild Game Processing Plant it is hung prior to skinning and inspection by the Official Veterinarian or Meat Hygiene Service Inspector. Only after this inspection and the subsequent application of the official health mark (UK2449EC) may the carcass be cut to the individual cuts

All stages of processing are regulated by the Food Standards Agency, the government body responsible for implementing the food safety regulations as laid down in law. Primary in these regulations is the requirement for traceability, hygiene and temperature control at all stages of production to ensure the safety of the venison and game that we eat. Recent changes in the Wild Game handling regulations have further re-enforced these requirements and so customers can be re-assured of a traditional meat produced to the highest of modern standards