



FACT SHEETS

2008 edition

Making the most of your **game**

Introduction

The game market has never been healthier. Supermarkets are overtaking butchers as the main purchase point for game, the pub and catering sector are putting it on their menus and direct sales are booming. Sales have increased 64% since 2002, the year the Countryside Alliance's promotional Game-to-Eat campaign began. Retail sales are expected to rise by nearly 8% this year making the market worth a projected £69 million.*

Game is very 'of the moment.' Its low fat, healthy eating properties and wild, natural and free-range distinctiveness make it a winner for today's consumer: it hits all the current buzz-terms.

But the shooting industry must not become complacent. It was only 6 years ago that dealers were threatening to stop picking up, the export market was diminishing and supermarkets were concerned about quality. The industry has performed the most incredible turn-around and the Countryside Alliance's Game-to-Eat programme has played a huge part in this. As an industry however, shoots still lag behind other food sectors in terms of providing a robust supply of quality product and our investment in product marketing is a fraction of what is spent on beef or lamb, for example. Simply put, we cannot afford to take our position on the supermarket shelves for granted.

This is why Game-to-Eat's budget is being increased to £250,000 this year in order to fund the first ever comprehensive marketing programme of game in the major supermarkets, the expansion of our innovative workshops for the catering industry and an even greater presence in the consumer media.

Simon Hart Chief Executive, Countryside Alliance

* Mintel Market Intelligence 2008

At the shoot

On the shoot day

From the moment it is shot, game is food. Provided it is treated properly and kept clean and in good condition, it is a valuable product which can be sold to the game dealer, distributed to the Guns and other helpers, or marketed in one of the other ways described in this leaflet. The production of quality game meat starts on the shoot day.

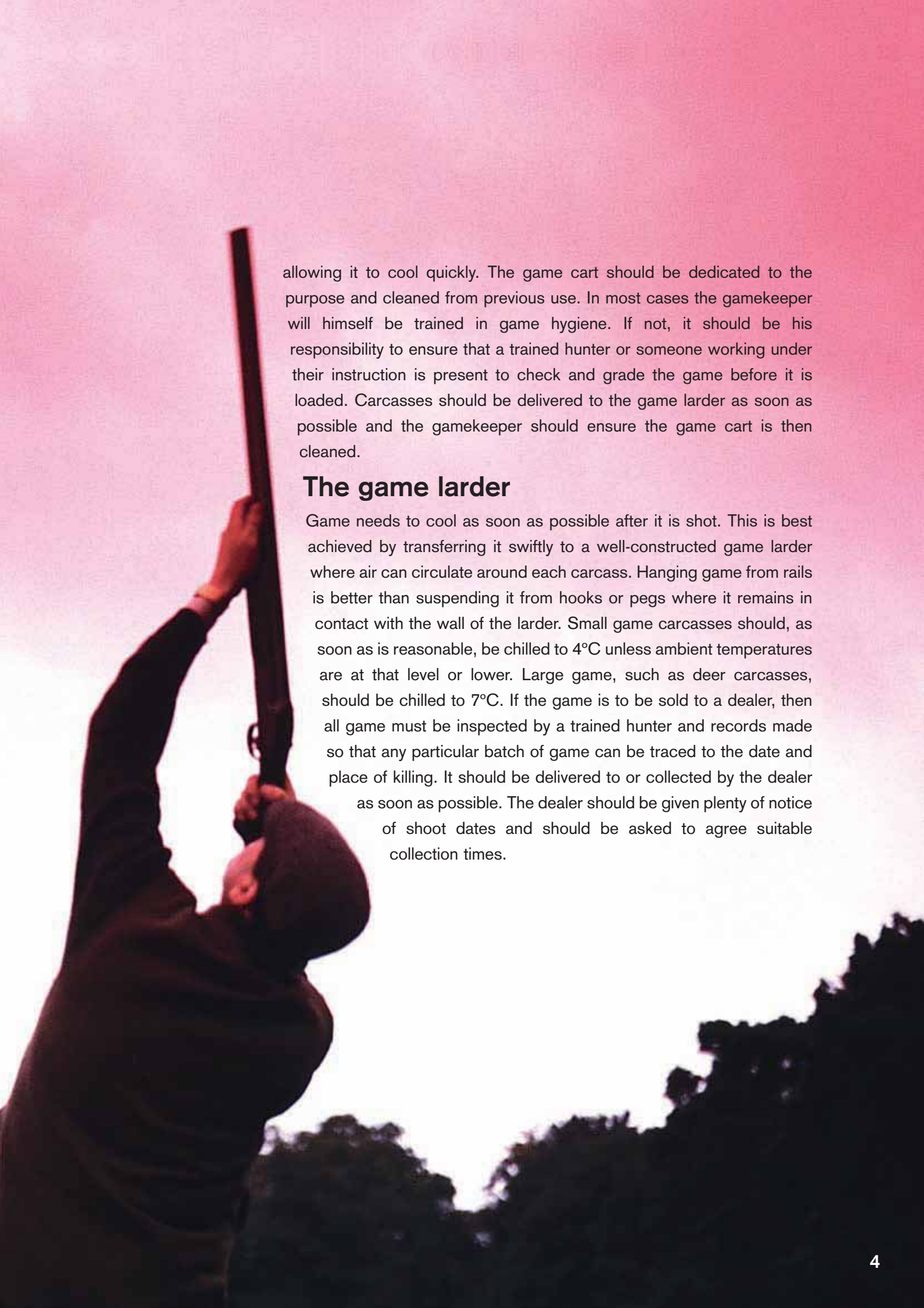
New regulations which came into force in 2006 mean that even greater care must now be taken to ensure that game is produced, stored and processed to the highest standards. They also mean that you or one of the members of your shooting party – such as a gamekeeper – may need to demonstrate competence in the selection, handling, transportation and marketing of game. This means that the ‘competent person’ needs to be trained to a standard acceptable to the Food Standards Agency. Details of who needs to be trained and who does not can be found in this leaflet under ‘Hygiene Regulations’.

In the field

At the end of the drive, any wounded game should be dispatched quickly and humanely with a sharp blow to the head with a priest, thus minimising any damage to the carcass. Game should be brought quickly to the game cart at the end of the drive. It is better to suspend game from a game carrier than to carry large numbers of birds in a gamebag. Any game which showed signs of abnormal behaviour before death or which is damaged, abnormal or contaminated should be noted and if necessary separated and isolated, in case it is unfit for human consumption. Carcasses for which the cause of death is unknown should not be processed for human consumption.

The game cart

Game should be collected by a game cart on which game can be suspended from rails and where it is protected from the weather. This ensures that the air can circulate around the game, thus



allowing it to cool quickly. The game cart should be dedicated to the purpose and cleaned from previous use. In most cases the gamekeeper will himself be trained in game hygiene. If not, it should be his responsibility to ensure that a trained hunter or someone working under their instruction is present to check and grade the game before it is loaded. Carcasses should be delivered to the game larder as soon as possible and the gamekeeper should ensure the game cart is then cleaned.

The game larder

Game needs to cool as soon as possible after it is shot. This is best achieved by transferring it swiftly to a well-constructed game larder where air can circulate around each carcass. Hanging game from rails is better than suspending it from hooks or pegs where it remains in contact with the wall of the larder. Small game carcasses should, as soon as is reasonable, be chilled to 4°C unless ambient temperatures are at that level or lower. Large game, such as deer carcasses, should be chilled to 7°C. If the game is to be sold to a dealer, then all game must be inspected by a trained hunter and records made so that any particular batch of game can be traced to the date and place of killing. It should be delivered to or collected by the dealer as soon as possible. The dealer should be given plenty of notice of shoot dates and should be asked to agree suitable collection times.

Storing game

Constructing a game larder

New regulations now apply to the operation of game larders. Where a larder is used to store unskinned or unplucked carcasses or for the basic dressing of deer for onward transport to an approved dealer, then it is regarded as an establishment which is part of a food business and must be registered with the local authority.

The principal factor contributing to the successful storage of wild game is ventilation. Carcasses will rapidly go mouldy under damp conditions. Rooms should have a high ceiling to allow the heat to disperse, together with adequate fly-proof air vents to create a cool air flow. Forced ventilation may be necessary in some cases. If possible provide a refrigerated chill room. Many shoots are now installing chillers and this enables them to extend the storage time for game, enabling greater flexibility over delivery to or collection by dealers, thus maximising revenue.

If a larder is additionally used to process game meat for direct local supply, then it becomes a food business in its own right. Construction standards for food business premises must comply with Regulation (EC) 852/2004, Annex II Ch I:

- Layout, design and construction must permit adequate cleaning/disinfection, protect against accumulation of dirt and permit good food hygiene practices
- Adequate flush lavatories must be available
- Hand washing facilities must be available
- Suitable natural or mechanical ventilation must be provided
- There must be adequate natural or artificial lighting
- Drainage facilities must be adequate for the purpose
- Where necessary, adequate changing facilities for personnel must be provided
- Cleaning agents and disinfectants must not be stored in areas where food is handled

In April 2008, Game-to-Eat conducted a survey of 5,411 shoots to ascertain the level of improvement in game handling facilities. The findings of the survey show that more shoots than ever before are using purpose-built, chilled game handling facilities:

- Over half of full-time kept shoots have upgraded their game storage facilities since 2006



Installing a Chiller

New regulations do not demand the installation of a chiller or refrigeration unit, but best practice will be to provide one. A number of basic options are available:

New purpose-built game larder Custom designed larders incorporating cold store and preparation room are available, based on a modular accommodation unit. They are portable, so may be an attractive option if planning is an issue. However, they are likely to be too costly for all but the largest estate. Allow upwards of £30,000.

Fit out existing building with insulation and refrigeration unit The cost of lining walls of an existing building with insulating panels is not exorbitant. Make a rough estimate by assessing the cubic capacity of the room to be insulated. The larger the cubic capacity, the less, per unit volume, the cost of panelling. Allow around £100 per cubic metre of larder space for larders in excess of 40m³, rising to £140 for 20m³ and £200 for 10m³.

A very competitive alternative to conventional refrigeration equipment is a 'monobloc' one-piece refrigeration unit inserted through a panel in the cold room, requiring no pipework or complicated electric engineering. A small monobloc unit costing around £1,500 will effectively chill a larder with a capacity of around 22m³.

Install a static self-contained chill room The size of the unit will be dictated by the amount of game which you will wish to store. The heat loading and thus the capacity of the refrigeration unit will also depend on the number of carcasses which have to be brought down to storage temperature at any one time. If installing a chiller unit within an existing building, it is essential that there is sufficient ventilation to disperse the heat.

Many manufacturers offer suitable chillers and it should be possible to install a modest unit for between £4,500 and £6,000. For the small shoot, a game fridge may be all that is required. A 420 litre capacity fridge will cost £750 while a 600 litre unit will cost £950.

Position a mobile chiller trailer within a suitable building More expensive than a static chilled store, because you are paying for a chassis, road wheels and all the other paraphernalia to make the unit mobile. However, if you wish to use it not just to store game but also to deliver it to a dealer or direct sale customers, then a trailer might have advantages. Expect to pay between £4,800 and £7,500 for a custom built cool trailer.



- Two-thirds of full-time kept shoots now have a chilling facility, up from one-third in 2006
- Half of all full-time kept shoots have registered their game storage facility with their Local Authority

Selling game

Selling Game in Small Quantities

If you wish to sell small quantities of furred game unskinned or game birds in the feather, either direct to the local consumer or to a local retailer directly supplying the final consumer, then you are exempt from the new EU food hygiene regulations and are not required to become a trained hunter. 'Local' means supply to someone within the boundaries of your local authority or adjoining local authorities, but also allows mail order and internet sales.

However, the Food Safety Act 1990, which makes it an offence to place unsafe food on the market or to mis-describe that food, still applies to you.

In 2007 the Government amended the Game Act to remove the requirement to hold either a local authority licence to deal in game or a game dealer's excise licence. It also, in England and Wales only, abolished the licence to kill game (the Game Licence). These changes have reduced the amount of regulation surrounding the sale of game by shoots and estates, as it is no longer an offence for a person to sell game to other than a game dealer without himself having a licence to deal in game. The changes also enable local retailers, such as butchers shops which have not in the past held a game dealer's licence, to sell game and venison.

Sales out of season

The Government has also removed the restriction on dealing in game birds and deer during the close season, permitting sale all year round provided the game was lawfully killed during the open season.

Game release weights

Game birds must be sufficiently mature at release to ensure that they are marketable as shot game at the start of the shooting season. Minimum weights:

- 16 week old partridge, 16oz
- 18-22 week old cock pheasant, 2½ lbs
- 18-22 week old hen pheasant, 1½ lbs



Hygiene training

European Food Hygiene Regulations

New European food hygiene Regulations which came into force in 2006 provide legal obligations for all those producing and supplying wild game. In particular, they mean that in most (but not all) circumstances, hunters producing game intended for human consumption must be trained to a standard which is acceptable to the Food Standards Agency (FSA), which is the competent authority for food hygiene. Game includes both 'small game' (birds and small mammals) and 'large game' (deer).

You do not need to be a trained hunter if:

- You are producing small or large game for domestic consumption or as gifts to your friends
- You are supplying small quantities of small or large game direct to the local consumer or to a local retailer directly supplying the final consumer
- You are supplying gualloched but unskinned deer carcasses direct to an approved Game Handling Establishment (commercial game dealer), provided that they are accompanied by the head and pluck (windpipe, diaphragm, heart, lungs, liver, kidneys and spleen)

In all other circumstances, including the supply of small game (including pigeons, rabbits, wildfowl etc.) in the feather to a commercial dealer, the carcasses must be checked by a trained hunter.

The regulations require that everyone who hunts wild game with a view to supplying Game Handling Establishments must have sufficient knowledge of the pathology of wild game and the production and handling of wild game and wild game meat after hunting, to undertake an initial examination of the game on the spot, unless they are part of a hunting team of which at least one trained hunter is a member. This will often be the gamekeeper or other professional.

A trained hunter, whether a hunter, gamekeeper or shoot manager, must have a knowledge of:

- The normal anatomy, physiology and behaviour of wild game
- Abnormal behaviour and pathological changes in wild game due to diseases, environmental contamination or other factors which may affect human health after consumption
- Legislation and administrative provisions on the animal and public health and hygiene conditions governing the placing on the market of wild game

It is the responsibility of the Game Handling Establishment operator to satisfy himself that those supplying him with game are suitably trained. The FSA recommends that the trained hunter

provides a certificate to the GHE, including the date and location at which the game was shot, the species and quantity, the hunter's identification (i.e. his training certificate number) and a declaration that there is nothing abnormal about the carcasses and that they have not been contaminated.

Training courses leading to the award of a certificate of competency are offered by shooting and gamekeeping associations and by colleges and educational establishments specialising in land-based education. Expect to pay around £100 for a one day course. In addition, holders of large game awards such as the deer stalkers' DSC Level 1 certificate are able to upgrade their knowledge by taking a small game module. Hunter training has been widely adopted by shoots and estates, and over three quarters of gamekeepers have now had formal game hygiene training. Even on smaller shoots, kept on a part-time basis, more than a third of keepers have been trained.

Further information is available from the Food Standards Agency's wild game handling guide on www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/wildgameguide.pdf

Shoots need to consider making appropriate arrangements for the disposal of graded out birds and, if processing, associated animal waste. Guidance on the disposal of animal by-product waste is available at www.netregs.gov.uk All environmental topics > Animal by-products

- The amount of birds fully-traceable back to shoots has increased by a third with over half of full-time kept shoots guaranteeing traceability on all batches
- Two-thirds of shot deer are now inspected on the shoot by a trained person (up from 57% in 2006)



Processing game

Game sales can bring a worthwhile return to the shoot, but it is important to consider the costs and the potential returns.

Dealer sales in-feather Selling game in-feather to a dealer is quick, easy and convenient, and will keep costs to a minimum. A good dealer will take all the game which is available and if he has advance notice of shoot dates then he may be able to collect at the end of each day, avoiding any need for the shoot to store birds. The service will cover the shoot's costs and creates the minimum of fuss. Be aware that prices paid by dealers tend to decrease as the season progresses and more birds come onto the market, and there is usually a marked fall in prices after Christmas.

Direct sales Prices obtained for direct sales made by shoots into the local community have increased since 2004 by about 20% for pheasants and 26% for partridges. Direct sale prices are higher at the start of the season and in the run-up to Christmas but fall later on in the season, although at a slower rate than prices paid by game dealers. Direct local sales attract a price at least twice that paid by game dealers. By the end of the season this is three times as high.

Average Dealer prices (pence)	2006	2004	2002
Pheasant	57	57	92
Partridge	54	51	70
Average Direct prices (pence)			
Pheasant	160	135	136
Partridge	154	122	125

Processing game Adding value even by the most basic processing will substantially increase returns, as fresh, locally processed birds will compete well with game sold in supermarkets. Registration as a food business is necessary and investment in processing facilities is required. These must comply with Regulation (EC) 852/2004, Annex II Ch I. (See the section in this leaflet on game larders).

Case study 1

The easiest way of adding value to your game by processing is to get your dealer to process the birds and return them to you. A Devon shoot guaranteed the local game dealer a supply of birds throughout the season and developed its own direct sales to the Guns and the local butcher, supplying up to 400 oven ready pheasants weekly. The dealer was paid £1 per bird for plucking and dressing and the birds required to satisfy direct sales were returned to the estate. The estate sold the processed birds for £4 per brace, thereby doubling its money. The dealer, meanwhile, supplied the pub trade and thus there was no competition between the estate and the dealer.

Costs:	£
Installation of new chiller	4,000

- No expensive preparation room or labour costs were involved, as the dealer did all the processing
- By keeping costs low and maintaining a good working relationship with the dealer/processor, a successful business was established

Case study 2

A large Midlands estate invested in on-site processing. A redundant farm building was redeveloped to create a processing facility and tray-wrapping and second-hand plucking machines were purchased. All available birds were processed on the estate and sold at £4 per brace of partridges and £4.50 per brace of pheasants to pubs, clubs and restaurants.

Costs:	£
Redevelopment of redundant farm building, including roofing, building works, plumbing and electrics	11,000
Installation of 3m x 4m chiller room, fitting out of 4m x 7m food preparation area, including lining wall and ceiling surfaces with sealed plastic-coated board	14,000
Dry plucking machine	2,500*
Tray wrapping machine	300
Labour was paid at agricultural rates	

- All building works were carried out by the estate building department. Specialist contractors undertook final fitting out.
- Investment on this scale is viable for the large estate, though not for the smaller shoot.
- Labour was difficult to obtain in busy periods.
- The estate found that 'instant meals' were the biggest seller. It now plans to diversify into game sausage meat and vacuum-packed game breasts in 1kg packs for the restaurant trade.

*Machine purchased secondhand for £500. Cost quoted is for new equipment.

Co-operative processing facilities The cost of converting buildings and installing chillers or other specialist equipment is considerable, and may be more than a shoot or estate can afford. However, if two or three shoots co-operate and make joint use out of a single facility, then the shared cost may be made affordable.

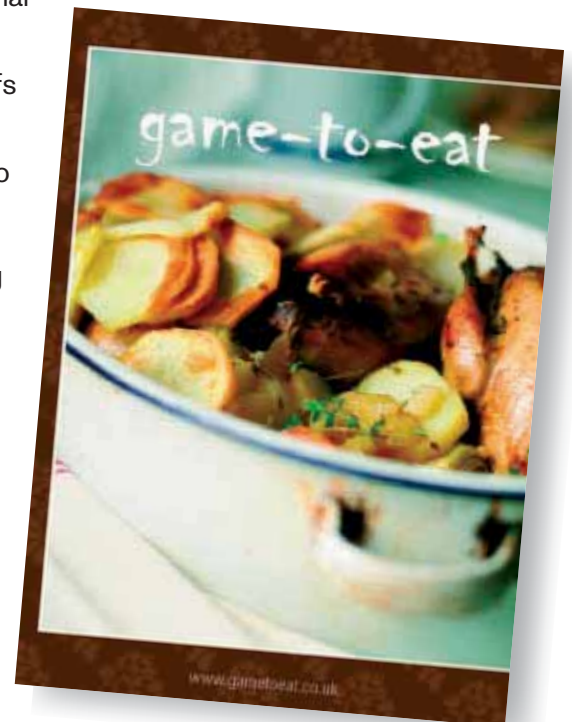
Game-to-Eat

Game-to-Eat can help by providing recipe booklets and promotional material to boost your sales!

Pubs The pub sector is one of the fastest growing food service sectors in the UK. With 34% of all food consumption now taking place outside the home, pubs offer shoots a tremendous opportunity to sell more of their game locally. Game is seasonal and locally-distinct, both of which are high on pub menu criteria. Game-to-Eat has produced a DVD showing pub chefs how to prepare and cook game and an annual newsletter for pubs. Both are now available to help shoots sell their game to pubs. Contact the Campaign for Shooting for details.

Farmers Markets Good returns can be achieved by selling game direct to the public at farmers' markets. If you want to sell game meat at a farmers' market, it must be:

- Locally produced, usually from within about 30 miles of the market.
- Produced or processed by the stallholder.
- Sold by the principal producer. This means that the stall should be operated by someone directly involved in the production process.
- In addition, the market must be operated in accordance with trading standards and environmental health advice and must be compliant with the other relevant legislation.



For more information about farmers' markets, contact the **National Farmers' Retail & Markets Association** on **0845 45 88 420** or visit **www.farma.org.uk**

game-to-eat has achieved

- 64% increase in game sales since 2002
- 40% increase in early season prices since 2002
- Media promotions reaching 67 million people

game-to-eat has promoted

- Game campaigns on BBC Radio 2, Radio 4 and BBC London
- First website dedicated to game

game-to-eat has defended

- The right to describe game meat as 'wild, natural and free-range' following a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority by the League Against Cruel Sports

game-to-eat has sponsored

- First ever research into game's nutritional value
- Game cookery workshops for caterers

game-to-eat produces

- Annual newsletters to 5,000 pubs and 9,000 butchers
- Point of sale material
- Shoot advice leaflets

Action List

- If your shoot does not have them, get a purpose-built game cart and build a game larder
- Ensure your keeper or shoot organiser attends a meat hygiene training course
- Install a chiller if you need to in order to meet the new regulations
- Supply oven-ready birds to your Guns
- Set up a long-term relationship with a game dealer
- Consider converting a redundant building to provide basic processing facilities
- Think about processing your own game for sale to local customers
- Check out sales opportunities in your local pub, butcher and farmers' market
- Remember that prices paid for dressed birds are more than twice as high as those for game in feather

Information

For further information about game and game marketing contact:

The Countryside Alliance's Shooting Campaign

Tel: **020 7840 9200**

countryside-alliance.org.uk

National Gamekeepers Organisation

Tel: **01388 665899**

nationalgamekeepers.org.uk

Game-to-Eat

gametoeat.co.uk

Email: **info@gametoeat.co.uk**

Guidance on the European Food Hygiene Regulations is available from the Food Standards Agency at **food.gov.uk**

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These Fact Sheets have been produced by The Countryside Alliance as part of its Game-to-Eat campaign to assist and promote sales of game meat.

It is a guide for laymen by laymen. It is not a definitive statement of the relevant law or an account of best practice for legal purposes.